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Chamber President calls on *Bay stakeholders to work together to rebuild the metro* and unlock its true potential

Chamber President Loyiso Dotwana has called on all relevant stakeholders in Nelson Mandela Bay to work together for the common purpose of rebuilding the metro in order to unlock its true potential.

Dotwana made the call during his speech at the Chamber's Annual Banquet which was held at the Sun Boardwalk Hotel and Convention Centre, on 30 November 2023, where over 850 guests were in attendance. The banquet is the Chamber's largest event which provides an opportunity for its members to reflect on both the challenges and achievements of the year.

His speech underscored the deteriorating state of service delivery due to political instability, which directly impacts upon business confidence and the ongoing sustainability of their operations in the Bay. He said that political parties at the local and provincial levels should put the best interests of the local economy and jobs first, to enable the Bay to move in a positive trajectory.

"The Chamber has taken this to heart and continues to adopt a strong activist and action orientated approach – all directed at achieving our vision of retaining investment and jobs in the Bay."

Dotwana further highlighted that 2023 has been an eventful and challenging year for business. "It is our view that our economy has been pushed to a tipping point – especially due to the severe energy and logistics crisis facing our country."

The Chamber's surveys undertaken among its members this year, highlighted that during periods of extreme loadshedding, around R900 million to R1 billion a month is lost to the local economy.

The logistics crisis, in turn, is reportedly costing the country R1 billion a day in economic output, which is the equivalent to 4,9% of annual GDP or R353 billion. This has also impacted local exporters and importers, particularly in terms of the inefficient port operations and the dysfunctional North to South rail corridor. "The dire state of the ports and rail network have in turn placed severe pressure on the road network, as increasing numbers of trucks are having to haul goods."

Dotwana also highlighted that the Chamber has been able to rally and mobilise the business community to roll up their sleeves and take action. "We are not standing back and waiting for someone else to do it. Rather, we are contributing in whatever way we can – skills, resources and time, and are willing to collaborate with other like-minded stakeholders. On a national level, it has also been good to see corporate South Africa commit to working with government to get the country working again and signing a pledge in this regard."

A key area where the Chamber is turning its focus to is the reinvention of the local economy due to the factors such as technological advancements, climate change, and the radically different geopolitical environment.

To this effect, it has established a Local Economy Reinvention Think Tank, which is anchored by six workstreams. Various business leaders and technical experts are working together to develop a new economic roadmap for the Bay.

"As we look ahead, I urge businesses to get involved in the Chamber as we take steps to strengthen our initiatives and interventions and move from a reinvention to a more sustainable phase," says Dotwana.

Chamber President Loyiso Dotwana

Echoing Dotwana's sentiments in her speech, Chamber CEO Denise van Huyssteen acknowledged the collective role that Chamber member companies and business volunteers have played in actively finding solutions to problems and proactively influencing change and action. Some highlights include the following:

- The approval by Council earlier this year of a Master Adopt A MOU which enables the Chamber us to collaborate with the Municipality in solving enabling environment issues which impact upon businesses.
- The 24 hour stage 5+ voluntary loadshedding schedule to enable better predictability and continuity for the operations of 40 large manufacturers.
- The Municipality supported the Chamber, resulting in the implementation of cost reflective wheeling tariffs.
- The Chamber's renewable energy cluster which represents 20% of the Metro's current electricity usage, continues to move forward with its plans to bring MW solar and wind power on stream from the end of next year.
- The cluster approach has grown beyond initial expectations – which has resulted in the geographic clusters growing to 8, with the Beachfront and Baakens Valley clusters being the latest to come on stream.
- The adoption of 20 Sub-Stations, geared at protecting this critical infrastructure from vandalism.
- Work continues at the 76 schools where leaks are being fixed and water conservation solutions are being implemented as part of Adopt A School.
- The Sanitation System Strategy team, which comprises a collaborative partnership between the Municipality and the Chamber, has made steady progress in working towards the implementation of an optimal plan to address various issues.
- The Entrepreneurship Desk has grown to 237 registered members.
- The Chamber's Nelson Mandela Bay Climate Change Coalition was successful in getting the Presidential Climate Commission to initiate the development of a Climate Resilient Development Plan for Nelson Mandela Bay. This process will run over an 18 month period.
- The signing of a MOU with Naamsa Automotive Business Council, enabling the Chamber to work more closely with the automotive industry, which forms the backbone of our local economy.
- The initiation of a Local Economy Reinvention Think Tank to assess opportunities to reimagine and diversify the Bay's manufacturing economy.
- On a national level, the Chamber is engaged in discussions with various stakeholders to lobby support for its interventions and to identify areas for collaboration.

"These achievements are a testament to our proactive and engaged members who have stepped up to the plate. As the Chamber, we remain committed to working with you to effect positive actions to retain investment and jobs in the Metro. There is no doubt that we have adopted the mindset of the Springboks and are all working together as a team who never gives up," concluded Van Huyssteen.

Chamber names founder of Bay's multi-award winning college Entrepreneur of the Year

Chamber President Loyiso Dotwana hands over a cheque to Tanya Kisten, the founder of Khanyisela College, who was named the 2023 Entrepreneur of the Year.

The Chamber has named Tanya Kisten, the founder of the multi-award winning locally based Khanyisela College, its 2023 Entrepreneur of the Year.

Founded 16 years ago, Khanyisela College has over the years amassed various accreditations and is also registered with the Department of Education as a private FET college that provides skills development solutions to companies and individuals within Nelson Mandela Bay and nationally.

With numerous accolades under its name, one of whom is the pmr.africa award, which it has won six years in a row for Leaders and Achievers, the institution has been built on a strong foundation of dynamic leadership and excellence.

Before establishing Khanyisela College, Kisten worked as an educator for eight years in the Northern Areas, including 6 years as a marketing practitioner for Volkswagen South Africa. However, her passion for youth and young adults has always been at the centre of what she does. This propelled her to establish an institution that focuses on creating training interventions that are fun, practical and effective.

Today, the college offers accredited full qualifications as well as skills programmes.

"It was not easy as I was the new kid on the block. One of the key challenges was the fact that I did not have the resources to start my own business, but what I had was a dream. That motivated me to push even harder to realise my dream," says Kisten.

"Today, Khanyisela College is a respected education and training providers amongst companies and individuals nationally. It has grown and adapted to many challenges, including COVID-19, and through resilience and hardwork, it has continued to thrive, and now online training has been added to the College's offerings."

The college currently employs 17 permanent employees, eight of whom have been retained over the years through internships and learnerships, as well as three interns who are currently serving a one-year internship.

Kisten says: "The unemployment rate is at its highest in the Eastern Cape at a staggering 38.8%, and the youth being the most affected. We believe in providing opportunities especially for these youth, Khanyisela College can contribute positively to providing hope, meaningful work, and dignity to the disenfranchised youth especially for whom there are not many opportunities."

She says the college has established itself as a market leader in their field of accredited training, especially for supervisory development, education and training. With their throughput rate (pass rate) of 94%, the learners not only enjoy the practical nature of the training and the engaged facilitators but take comfort in the strong possibility of receiving a Certificate of Competence at the end.

"With our strong relationships with the SETA's and QCTO (the quality assurance body), the college continually seeks to improve its systems, people and materials, resulting in unqualified audits for external verifications every time."

Outside of her college work, Kisten also serves as a Trustee on the Northern Areas People Development Initiative (NAPDI) board where she contributes her experience and skills in education and strategic planning.

She has also established the Kisten Bursary fund to support learners of the Tomorrow's Leaders project who are academically capable of successfully completing the programme but do not necessarily have the funds for tuition fees.

The Chamber also handed another award to EcoUnity, which participated in the Chamber's Young Professionals Think Tank with focus on water and electricity, for their innovative solutions to address the city's water and electricity challenges.

EcoUnity is a social enterprise founded in 2023 by a group of dedicated young professionals in Nelson Mandela Bay. The Enterprise was established in response to the urgent local issues of water and electricity supply in the Metro. The group intends to implement a sustainable solution that will alleviate the socio-economic implications of resource scarcity and contribute to a greener future in South Africa, focusing

They are aiming to develop a low-cost, low-tech, and environmentally sustainable model equipped with hybrid renewable energy systems, water recycling systems, and an AI-driven management system.

The renewable energy systems will generate power for each home, which will be stored in a centralised battery bank. This resource pooling approach will ensure a continuous power supply and also reduce individual dependency on the unstable municipal power grid. Recycled waste-water coupled with harvested rainwater will be used for non-consumptive amenities such as irrigation and bathrooms.

Ford Celebrates 100 Years in South Africa,

Announces Ranger PHEV Investment, New Products and Legacy CSR Projects

Ford Motor Company celebrated its proud 100-year legacy in South Africa with the announcement of a R5.2 billion (US$272 million) investment in its local operations for production of the first-ever Ford Ranger Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV).

Ford is also marking this historic milestone with the reveal of an expanded product range that will soon be available to its South African customers.

Additional derivatives of the country's top-selling double cab pickup are being previewed prior to their upcoming local launch, comprising the adventure-oriented Ranger Tremor and the Ranger Platinum – the most luxurious Ranger ever.

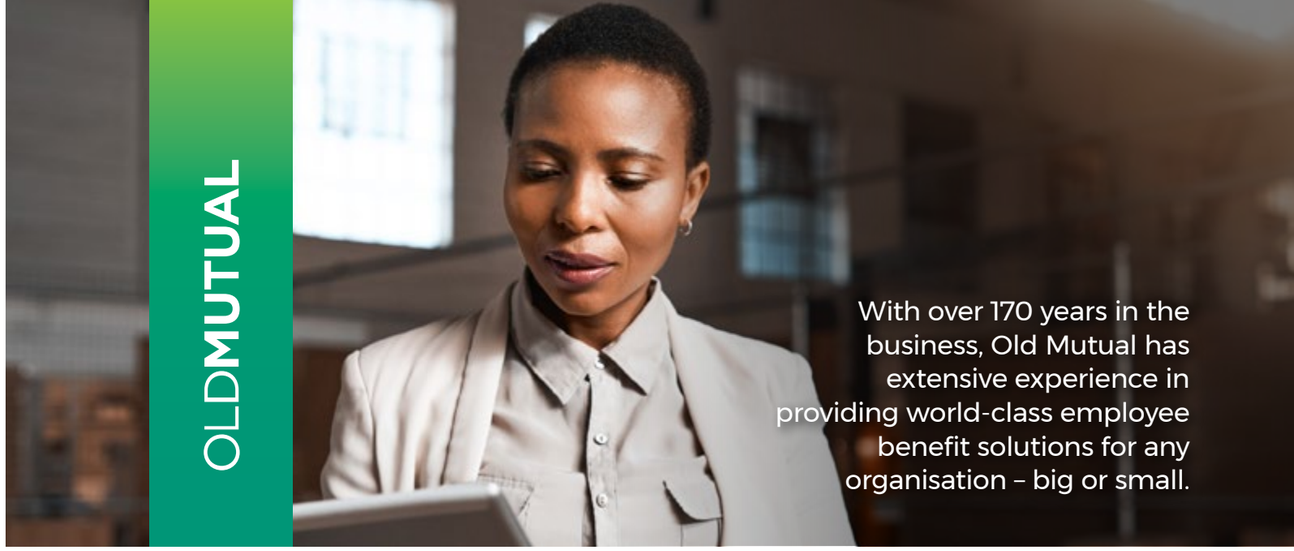
"This is a momentous occasion as we celebrate Ford's Centenary in South Africa," said Elena Ford, Chief Dealer Engagement officer, Ford Motor Company. "From humble beginnings that established Ford in South Africa in November 1923, our team and facilities here have grown into a world-class operation that delivers the highest-quality vehicles to our customers in South Africa and around the world.

"It reinforces our family-company beliefs and values that continue to guide our business and are a source of pride for the families who have worked here for generations, the dealers who have been the face of the brand for decades, and our loyal customers who embody the enthusiasm for the Blue Oval," Elena Ford said.

Along with continuing to invest in vehicles and facilities in South Africa, Ford Motor Company is deeply committed to building a better world. Empowering and uplifting communities is central to this ethos and it's a topic that is very important to Ford Motor Company and its philanthropic arm, the Ford Motor Company Fund. Mary Culler, president of the Ford Fund, said: "Along with our already extensive range of community projects in South Africa, I am proud to launch three far-reaching education projects as part of the Centenary celebrations that will create a lasting legacy for thousands of young people in this wonderful country."

In keeping with the 100th anniversary celebration theme, Ford and its project partners are creating 100 maths and science laboratories for primary schools around the country, building 100 early childhood development (ECD) centres, and funding 100 youth scholarships to promote learning in the fields of science, technology, engineering and maths. Ford currently employs approximately 5,200 people in South Africa. The local operations support around 60,000 jobs in the total value chain amongst supplier companies and contributes more than 1 percent to South Africa's GDP.

Ford has a long and proud legacy in South Africa, established in Nelson Mandela Bay in November 1923 as first global manufacturer to set up local vehicle production.



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Leading local plastic manufacturer wins prestigious Presidential SMME Award

Siyabulela Mandla,
MD of Rhino Manufacturing

One of Nelson Mandela Bay's leading multifaceted plastic manufacturers has won this year's prestigious Homegrown SMME of the Year award, taking home a R100 000 cash prize.

The department hosts the awards to promote entrepreneurial activities by identifying and showcasing innovative South African based companies and recognising outstanding performance and skills that positively impact the country's GDP.

More importantly, recognition is given to homegrown SMMEs who manufacture proudly local products of high quality using locally sourced raw materials.

The criteria for the awards focuses on South African founded companies who are registered with the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) and the South African Revenue Services (SARS) and are over 3 years in operation. The business should also be operating within South African borders.

Motherwell resident and Rhino Manufacturing managing director Siyabulela Mandla says the business has a direct and indirect staff complement of over 50 employees. In 2018, the business reached a milestone through an empowerment deal that was facilitated by the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) which afforded Mandla an opportunity to buy a majority stake in the company, while long standing employees were given 10% shares of the business via an employee trust. This subsequently led to the formation of a new entity under the Rhino banner called Rhino Manufacturing, which became a level 2 BBEEE company.

"From humble beginnings as a plastic recycler almost 50 years ago, Rhino Plastics has diversified extensively; initially into the manufacturing of sheeting and films for the construction, packaging, and agricultural sectors, and then ventured into irrigation piping at a later stage.

As part of the transition, Rhino Manufacturing took over the manufacturing capabilities of Rhino Plastics and focused on locally manufactured products which are sold nationally and some exported within the African market" says Mandla

The company manufactures the following products in its Bay based plant:

- Plastic Film for the construction and agricultural sectors
- Irrigation Pipe for the agricultural sector
- HDPE for agriculture and the telecommunication sector - Fibre Optic installer
- Packaging for the agricultural, mining, and automotive sectors.

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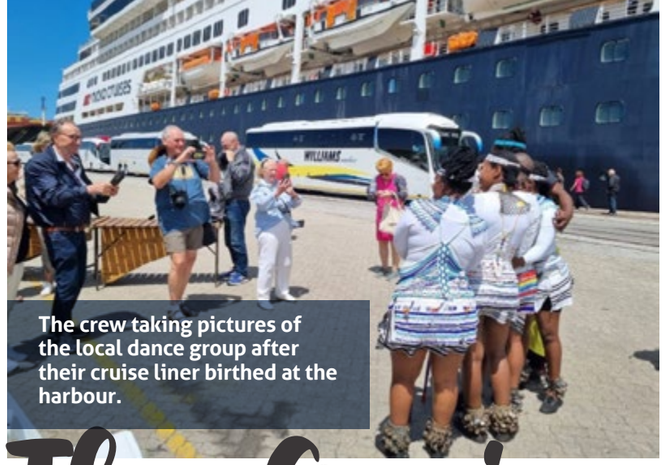

The crew taking pictures of the local dance group after their cruise liner birthed at the harbour.

The Cruise Season

officially kicked off in Nelson Mandela Bay

The Metro welcomed the Vasco da Gama cruise liner, its captain, crew, and all attendees at the opening of the cruise liner season this month.

The city estimates the season will inject around R55 million into the local economy and has committed to improving infrastructure, ensuring a clean and safe environment, and fostering sustainable, environmentally conscious development.

The MMC for EDTA, Cllr Shuling Lindoor expressed deep gratitude to several key stakeholders, including Transnet Port Authority, private sector tourism operators, tour operators, and the Economic Development, Tourism, and Agriculture directorate for their unwavering commitment to promoting their city as a top cruise destination.

She also thanked the Captain of the Vasco da Gama and all other cruise line operators for choosing their city as a port of call. The city is eagerly awaiting the arrival of cruise passengers from around the world, encouraging them to explore the city's diverse wildlife and cultural attractions. She further emphasised the importance of continued collaboration among stakeholders to ensure a highly successful cruise liner season that benefits the city, its residents, and visitors.

The locals reaffirming the city's status as the Friendly City as they warmly welcome the captain of the cruise liner and his crew.

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Women Empowerment Network Workshop

The ladies at the Women Empowerment Network Workshop, in collaboration with the Women's Circle, were honoured to have had the legendary Yvonne Chaka Chaka grace them with her presence.

Known widely as a singer, songwriter, entrepreneur, humanitarian and teacher, it was inspiring for the audience of around 120 local women, hear first hand her experiences and learnings. South Africa is fortunate to have amazing "can do" people like Yvonne who remain passionate about our country's potential.

We would like to express our gratitude to her for delivering such an inspiring message.

Furthermore, we had encouraged the ladies to contribute one or more sanitary towels to the Khazimla project, which distributes these essential items to seven schools on a monthly basis. Thank you to all those who generously donated, your efforts have made a significant impact on someone's life.

The Women Empowerment Network is proudly sponsored by FNB.

Image captions from top to bottom:

1. Celebrated songstress Yvonne Chaka Chaka graced the last event for the year where she shared an inspiring message calling on women to take up spaces and show strong leadership.
2. Second from the right is Michelle Brown of Brown's PR who is the brains behind the event seen here pictured with some of the guests.
3. The audience listening attentively as Yvonne Chaka Chaka delivered her key message.
4. From left to right is Riana Ferreira, Ayanda Makaula, Shirley Zietsman, Suriya Moodlely and Michelle Brown, who are all key figures in the Women Empowerment Network.

The Perserverance Cluster recently cleared 90 bags of plastic litter running along the south east side of the Spar Distribution Centre. A team from the Zwartkops Conservancy was deployed in the area to assist with these cleaning up activities.

The trailblazing Perseverance Cluster was the first of the Chamber's eight geographical clusters to be established. This team has demonstrated tremendous foresight and willingness to be part of the collective efforts to get Nelson Mandela Bay working.

The Chamber held a briefing on our Local Economy Industrialisation Think Tank, which we are in the process of establishing in order to brainstorm opportunities to retain and attract employment in the Bay. This is aimed at leveraging the strong manufacturing capabilities and skills which exist across our local industry.

The next step will be to launch the various workstreams, so the brainstorming can begin. Thank you to all the various business representatives who have volunteered to get involved.

Team hard at working loading the bags

The team of volunteers selfelessly giving of their time and energy to boost the local economy

The Chamber was fortunate to have Dr Imitiaz Sooliman from Gift of the Givers visit Nelson Mandela Bay few weeks back. While in the city, he gave some words of inspiration about South Africa, emphasising that it can be fixed through ordinary people rolling up their sleeves and taking positive action where ever they can.

Pictured below from left to right are Kelvin Naidoo (Auto X), Lance Petersen (Santova), Greg Blandford (Rubicon), Dr Imitiaz Sooliman (Gift of the Givers), Denise van Huyssteen (Chamber), Hannes de Waal (Sundays River Citrus Company), Gerhard Pretorius (Volkswagen), Selwyn Naidoo (Volkswagen), Tony Pienaar (Isuzu) and Christiaan Theron (Aspen).

Social Connect

Two weeks ago emerging professionals gathered for the 6th Professionals Social Connect, which aims to continue building bridges between ambition and experience.

This platform creates a unique environment in which these professionals can engage with industry leaders, paving the way for future success and making connections.

Thank you to SPAR Eastern Cape for hosting us.

The Empowerment Network is proudly sponsored by FNB.

Guests checking their names as they make their way into the venue.

SPAR EC Advertising Manager Roseann Shadrach extending a word of welcome to the guests.

Chamber Membership Coordinator Honey Koba was the day's MC and kept the audience glued throughout the event.

The main speaker was Phiwokuhle Ncanywa, Director at Joubert Galpin Searle, who spoke about resilience and how this has shaped his journey thus far.

The venue enjoyed a decent turnout where the guests took full advantage of the day's activities.

Everyone had a good time, sharing light moments in between formal engagements.

One thing that stands out with this highly sought-after event is the level of engagement it offers to the participants where they are able to raise issues and share knowledge.

The group having a good time after the formalities.

Chamber ENGAGEMENTS

The newly appointed US Consular Chief met with us to discuss his priorities in facilitating and supporting trade between the two countries.

Pictured left to right are Denise van Huyssteen (Chamber), Lunga Mjodo (Chamber), Julia Muller (Consul Support), Benjamin Chapman (Consular Chief) and Nolundi Mzimba (Coca Cola).

Dr Imitiaz Sooliman from Gift of the Givers gave a motivational address to around 150 school principals and educators from schools in disadvantaged areas of Nelson Mandela Bay.

Thank you to Chamber members First National Bank and Old Mutual for supporting this event.

From left to right : Rose de Doncker (Paterson High School), Pule Setai (National Treasury), Denise van Huyssteen (Chamber), Dr Imtiaz Sooliman (Gift of the Givers), Ernest Gorgonzola (Department of Education), Sandile Phillip (First National Bank), Anthea Moodley (First National Bank) and Thembela Makaula (Old Mutual).

Ford South Africa held a multi-stakeholder event to celebrate its 100 years of operations in the country. In 1923 the company started producing vehicles at its Port Elizabeth plant, at the rate of around 10 vehicles a day. Today the company, which employs over 5200 people in South Africa, produces 720 vehicles a day at its Silverton Plant.

Ford South Africa also announced during the event that it will be producing the first plug-in hybrid Ranger during the course of next year. This will be exported to Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

Pictured at the satellite centenary event which was held at the Ford Engine Plant in Nelson Mandela Bay from left to right are Ashraf Walters (DSV), Denise van Huyssteen (Chamber) and Shawn Govender (Ford Engine Plant Manager).

Chamber ENGAGEMENTS

Chamber Member Proxa recently invited our CEO Denise van Huyssteen to participate in their "We're at a watershed moment" workshop in Cape Town recently. This brought together experts and businesses in the water industry to discuss long-term water resilience solutions for the country.

Pictured below is Wimpie van der Merwe, Chief Technical Officer for Proxa, who gave an overview of some practical water solutions.

From left to right are Xola Mkontwana (Transnet), Zukile Dambuza (Transnet), Chuma Butshingi (Transnet), Selwyn Naidoo (VWSA), Denise van Huyssteen (Chamber), Ntombi Kulati (Transnet), Sixolile Makaula (Transnet), Lance Petersen (Chamber Transport and Logistics Task Team Lead), Tony Pienaar (Isuzu), Kelvin Naidoo (Auto X) and Hannes de Waal (Sundays River Citrus Company).

Transnet team met with the Chamber representatives to discuss a range of logistics related issues.

The top priority on the Chamber's list is the rehabilitation of the North to South rail corridor and improved efficiencies at our two ports. Nelson Mandela Bay, with its strong manufacturing base, has the potential to become an exports hub on the contintent but to achieve this vision, rail and the ports need to run at optimal levels.

The Chamber team met with Adriaan Myburgh, the Chairperson of the Institute of Plumbers South Africa (IOPSA) in the Eastern Cape. The organisation, which represents around 50 local plumbers, is involved in inspecting and enforcing plumbing related regulations. They are also currently involved in assisting with the updating of various municipal water by-laws.

Pictured below left to right are Denise van Huyssteen (Chamber), Basil Mugwagwa (Chair of the Chamber's Water & Sanitation Task Team) and Adriaan Myburgh (IOPSA).

Chamber ENGAGEMENTS

We recently welcomed a group of new members, where we provided an overview of our interventions and services.

The sense of community and collaboration that was present throughout the session was truly inspiring. We are excited to continue our work in supporting the business community in Nelson Mandela Bay, and we look forward to seeing the growth and success of our new members.

Thank you to everyone who accepted our invitation.

Many businesses realise the crucial role the Chamber plays in its lobbying and advocacy efforts which are geared towards creating an ease of doing business in Nelson Mandela Bay. It is for this reason that more businesses sign up to become members to take advantage of these benefits.

Chamber CEO Denise van Huyssteen welcoming new member companies and taking them through the Chamber's strategic priorities.

Gareth Burley from Microcare interacting with Philip Lunnon from Rhinowater.

Denise interacting with some of the new members

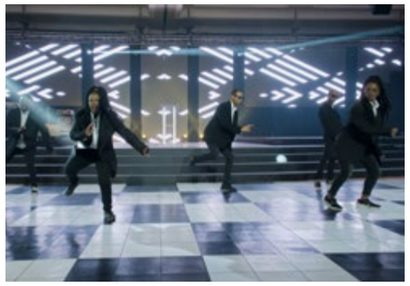
The new member welcome event also provides networking opportunities amongst new members to find synergies.

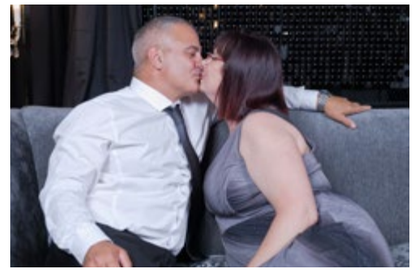
Chamber EVENTS

Chamber EVENTS

The Nelson Mandela Bay Business Chamber closed the year with a bang last week when it held its classic Annual Banquet at the Sun Boardwalk Hotel and Convention Centre to celebrate 2023 with its members and also to reflect on the year's achievements. The event is always a highly anticipated gathering as it offers members an opportunity to put their best foot forward by dressing up to honour the occasion.

Chamber EVENTS





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Chamber EVENTS

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Incompatibility

"My employee is incapable of fostering good working relations and does not 'fit in' with the corporate culture of our company."

Employers are often faced with the prospect of dealing with difficult personalities in the workplace. This can range from an employee being rude, abrasive, disruptive and uncooperative. The extent of such behaviour is usually not sufficient to warrant formal disciplinary proceedings against such employee, based upon misconduct. In most cases, it entails subtleties which ultimately escalates and creates disharmony in the workplace.

Incompatibility is not specifically catered for in our legislation and in particular, the code of good practice. It is however – by virtue of prevailing case law – accepted as a specie of incapacity. It thus stems from an employee's inherent inability to foster good working relations or maintain a harmonious working environment. Put differently: the employee's personality is of such nature that he/she is incapable of working harmoniously with fellow employees and managers. In essence, it is akin to an employee who is unable to perform his/her duties due to ill-health or an employee not able to meet his/her work performance standard.

The mere fact that an employee is unable or fails to maintain cordial and harmonious working relationships with his/her peers and managers, is not necessarily the high-water mark of these occurrences. The employer will ultimately be required to establish whether such "inability" and subsequent disruption of harmony in the workplace, give rise to such employee's inability to perform his/her contractual obligations and/or prevents others from meeting theirs.

Prior to embarking upon such process, the employer should have reasonable and objective justification of the primary cause of the disharmony, not only the subjective views of certain individuals. This will ultimately have to form the basis of determining whether the disharmony adversely effects the business and that the employee's dismissal is the only reasonable option in which the cause of the disharmony could be removed.

The very nature of these proceedings require a cautious approach by employers. Similar to poor work performance incapacity, employers should approach this as an employee's ingrained interpersonal inabilities, which he or she is not necessarily capable of improving. Hence, not relying on misconduct proceedings, which originates from an employee's intention.

From this perspective, the following are considered as fundamental procedural steps confirmed by our Labour Courts, when embarking upon incompatibility proceedings:

1. Establish the nature and extent of the cause of complaint and the disharmonious environment created.
2. Although not required, conduct investigation and formulise report setting out complaints.
3. The employee should be advised of the conduct allegedly causing the disharmony.
4. Schedule a number of counselling sessions with the employee, aimed at discussing remedial action and improving the employee's inability to foster good working relationships.
5. To the extent required and if appropriate, consider external involvement and subsequent reports from clinical phycologists or occupational therapists. Such reports, in most cases, will establish the underlying inability of the employee.
6. Setting of timelines in order to assess improvement and afford the employee reasonable time to improve.
7. Employee to be monitored and guided by superior / manager. If the strained relationship is with the manager, such manager must make an effort to improve the relationship from his/her side.
8. Importantly, consider reasonable alternatives within the organisational structure.
9. If there is no improvement and no alternatives, the employee – by virtue of an incapacity enquiry – should be afforded an opportunity to make representations as to why the employment relationship should not be terminated.

It might appear to entail an arduous and lengthy process, but executed with sound legal advice and effective strategy, employers will be positioned to assess improvement, consider alternatives or, as last resort, terminate the employee's services.

With any dismissal, the substantive and procedural fairness will be scrutinised by CCMA commissioners. It is thus important to maintain detailed written records of the counselling sessions and any written reports or communication with the employee.

Marco obtained is LLB in 2009 and completed his Master's Degree in Labour Law, as well as Post Graduate Diploma in Labour Law in 2015 and 2016 respectively.

He joined Joubert Galpin Searle as Director in the Labour division in 2022 and was appointed as Equity Director in 2023.

Focus areas: Review Applications of arbitration awards, Arbitrations (CCMA & Bargaining Councils), Disciplinary investigations and subsequent prosecution, Employee Relations, Drafting Employment Contracts and Policy Documents, Chairing Internal Disciplinary Hearings, Corporate Restructuring (Retrenchments), Employment Law Compliance Audits, Exemption Applications, Contractual Disputes, Commercial employment transactions, Restraint of Trade disputes

The Importance of Fire Safety in the Hospitality and Tourism Sector

Fire is a significant risk to any business, but even more so in the hospitality sector. Hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, bars, leisure centres etc. are at a higher risk of a fire as they have a high occupancy rate and can be occupied up to 24 hours a day. Being responsible not only for your own safety but that of the employees and guests means keeping safety standards high is paramount.

If you don't have the essential firefighting equipment installed, good fire procedures in place, or if you breach the fire safety regulations, you are putting lives at risk. A fire also costs money and depending on the severity of the damage a fire causes, the costs could be tremendous. In fact, many businesses after a serious fire do not reopen. As well as property damage, there is the cost of human casualties and the loss of business.

A fundamental part of any fire safety plan is a fire risk assessment. To ensure your business remains compliant and meets safety standards, it's advisable to form a working relationship with a trusted fire safety services provider. The fire risk assessment must identify the following:

- **What is a fire hazard?**
- **Who is at risk?**
- **What is your evacuation plan?**
- **Record findings.**
- **Maintain your fire risk assessment.**

The appointment of fire wardens is essential. The number of wardens required depends on several factors including building size, number of guests, the layout of the building and so forth.

Essential fire safety equipment is crucial particularly in areas of higher risk, such as kitchens and catering facilities in hospitality establishments. This includes:

- **Smoke alarms to detect a fire**
- **Fire extinguishers and hose reels to extinguish a small fire**
- **Emergency signage and lighting to help guide people to safety when evacuating**

Firefighting equipment won't save lives if they don't work. They should be checked monthly and serviced annually. Knowing what to do in the event of a fire breaking out is crucial. If you know what to do, you could prevent the fire from spreading thus saving lives and as much of the property as possible.

Bay Fire Safety Solutions can provide firefighting equipment, accredited staff training, fire risk assessments and evacuation plans and fire drills. Fire safety should never be overlooked as the results of poor practices can be extremely devastating.

Volkswagen signs agreement with Government of Egypt for strategic co-operation viability study of shared automotive painting facility

Standing: Dr Mostafa Madbouly, Prime Minister of Egypt and Dr Hala Al-Saeed, Minister of Planning and Economic Development
Signing (left to right): Martina Biene, Chairperson and Managing Director of Volkswagen Group South Africa (VWSA); Waleid Gamal Eldien, Chairman of the General Authority for the Suez Canal Economic Zone; Ayman Soliman, Chief Executive Officer of the Sovereign Fund of Egypt and Dr Ahmed Fikry, Managing Director of the East Port-Said Development Company

Volkswagen and Government of Egypt have signed an agreement to work together to develop a feasibility study on a shared automotive painting facility within the East Port Said Industrial Zone in the East Port Said Automotive Zone in Cairo.

The agreement was signed by the Chairman of the General Authority for the Suez Canal Economic Zone, Waleid Gamal Eldien, Chief Executive Officer of the Sovereign Fund of Egypt, Ayman Soliman, Managing Director of the East Port-Said Development Company, Dr. Ahmed Fikry and Chairperson and Managing Director of Volkswagen Group South Africa (VWSA), Martina Biene in the presence of the Prime Minister of Egypt, Dr Mostafa Madbouly at the headquarters of Council of Ministers in the New Administrative Capital. The signing ceremony was also witnessed by the Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Dr. Hala Al-Saeed.

The Government of Egypt has shown earnest commitment to the advancement of localising the automotive industry in Egypt. The commitment was duly formalised in June 2022 with the announcement of the Automotive Industry Development Programme (AIDP). The AIDP aims to foster the local value addition, increase vehicle production volume, boost and attract investment and improve emission standards in the automotive sector.

Volkswagen has expressed interest in expanding its presence in the Egyptian market by participating in the AIDP. As such, Volkswagen intends to explore the feasibility of the establishment of a multi-model automotive painting facility in the East Port Said Automotive Zone (EPAZ). The EPAZ is planned to become a world-class automotive manufacturing and logistics hub with the East Port Said Industrial Zone. It is situated within the Suez Canal Economic Zone of Egypt.
Biene commented: "Volkswagen is excited about the prospects of establishing its presence in the Egyptian market as part of its long term growth plans on the continent, especially in North Africa. The AIDP is one of the most progressive automotive programmes on the continent which Volkswagen intends to be part of. The signing of the strategic co-operation agreement with the Government of Egypt is the continuation of Volkswagen's strategy to play a pioneering and leading role in the development of the automotive industry in Africa."

Volkswagen has been manufacturing vehicles in South Africa for over 72 years. It has three other vehicle assembly facilities in Sub-Saharan Africa. The facilities are in Kenya, Rwanda and Ghana. In addition, Volkswagen has a presence in 17 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa where it sells passenger and commercial vehicles through licensed importers.

Boardwalk birthday marks 23 year career for Casino's opening team staffer

Siyanda Mtongana

Siyanda Mtongana was a fresh-faced 27-year-old when he was part of Boardwalk Casino's opening team, working his first permanent job as a guest service attendant. Twenty-three years later, he is one of just three of his original team remaining at the Sun International beachfront casino in Gqeberha. Through customer dedication, passion, commitment to furthering his career and displaying leadership qualities, he has worked his way up to the position of gaming floor manager.

"Boardwalk's opening was an exciting opportunity for me, as I was doing piece jobs before it opened, such as working as a petrol attendant. It meant job security," he said. Mtongana nostalgically recalled how he forgot an essential part of his wardrobe on opening day, when 20 000 people flocked to see the new casino in October 2020.

"We opened at 10am and it was hectic. I had left my belt at home, and that was where you would hang your keys for the slot machines," he said. "Our uniform was issued to us, and by the time I got home that night, my feet were burning from standing all day in a brand-new pair of shoes."

Over the years, he has become used to being on his feet all day, as he assists guests and manages the guest attendants on his shift.

Training and support have been a hallmark of his time at Boardwalk Casino. "Since the beginning, we have always been given proper training. We were taught Boardwalk's mission statement and we composed it into a song which we sung at our training graduation. It was drilled into us, and we lived it."

After a number of years, Mtongana was recognised for his hard work and was promoted to slots floor operations supervisor; a position for which he received training for a full year. We spent a night at the Fish River Sun, which, as my first-ever hotel stay, was extremely memorable." His first flight was also made possible by the hospitality group, when he flew to Johannesburg for work.

Mtongana has many memories from his years working at Boardwalk. "My first long service awards (five years) with Sun International was themed 'Night of the Stars'. It seemed like we were in Hollywood, with the cameras flashing on us upon entering the Conference Centre - the glitzy decor, the mood and the music really made us feel like stars.

"A British customer once gave me one pound as a tip, which I asked if I could keep as a souvenir, and I still keep it in my wallet today. When it comes to winners, the Millennium Mania machine paid out R2-million, and I remember the excitement of that winner. Several people have also won R1-million on the Dream Machine during my shifts."

As a sport fanatic, meeting cricketing greats from the West Indies and Australia on their respective tours in the city when they visited Boardwalk are some of Mtongana's highlights – and of course, many Springboks too over the years.

He feels emotional intelligence is key to working with people, both customers on the casino floor and staff.

"In 2015, I decided to make use of Sun International's financial assistance to further my studies and started studying towards a degree in law at Unisa. It was challenging to balance work, with shifts that sometimes start at midnight and would run until 8am, but I completed it in 2020."
He has completed several modules of a post graduate diploma in labour relations management and is currently taking a break from studying.

"Boardwalk is a close family who support each other – this is one of the things that have kept me going. I wouldn't trade the memories and relationships I've built over the years for anything."

For Mtongana, success in the workplace still comes down to the basics: "Your customer comes first at all times."

VWSA employees roll up their sleeves to conserve the environment

The teams thoroughly combing the area to dislodge every piece of foreign objects.

Ready to make a difference when it comes to environmental sustainability, a group of 180 Volkswagen Group South Africa (VWSA) employees and their loved-ones spent their time cleaning the Nelson Mandela Bay coastline.

In partnership with the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA), VWSA hosted its Show of Hands volunteer event in the Bay, which is held by VWSA twice a year.

VWSA challenged volunteers to clean up a 2,2-kilometre stretch of beach along Marine Drive, from Pollock Beach to Flat Rocks. In total 100 bags of litter (not including bulky litter such as old tyres, metal pipes and planks) were collected in two hours during the initiative, which was then sorted and recycled where appropriate.

Environmental sustainability is a critical priority for VWSA. Last month, the company was honoured with both the international Lean & Green Management Award and the SJM Flex Environmental award from Exporters Eastern Cape, for its efforts in the field of environmental responsibility.

The group was happy to pose for a picture after spending 2 hours sprucing up the area.

In collaboration with neighbouring factories, a team of volunteers from Aspen invested their time cleaning around the North End Lake to improve the area's well-being.

Focusing on the area surrounding their manufacturing facility, the initiative not only strengthened team unity but also highlighted the remarkable synergy among employees from various departments.

Through collaboration,n the team made a positive impact around their immediate area.

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