

**POINTS BY COUNCILLOR RETIEF ODENDAAL
THE HONOURABLE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF THE NELSON MANDELA BAY
MUNICIPALITY**

**TO: MEETING WITH SA BREWERIES : INVESTMENT & FOETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME
(FAS) IN NORTHERN AREAS**

THURSDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2022, SA BREWERIES AT 13H00

BACKGROUND:

- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) refers to a pattern of birth defects that may develop in children whose mothers drank alcohol during pregnancy. FAS is a disability characterized by facial anomalies, low birth weight, mental handicaps or learning disabilities, central nervous system dysfunction and varying degrees of damage or malfunction of internal organs.
- FAS is the single largest cause of mental retardation. It is even more tragic given that FAS is the only congenital cause of mental retardation that is 100% preventable. The cost to society as well as the individuals and families dealing with this disorder is staggering.
- It is envisaged that through the FASD Research and Prevention Programme there is a lot we can do to educate and connect families with resources to deal with this disorder. This programme is a profound step in the right direction of educating mothers to be and women in general that they can make a difference in the lives of families.
- Alarmingly, South Africa has been ranked third on the list of countries with the highest level of alcohol abuse! And South Africa has the highest reported rate of foetal alcohol syndrome in the world. It is estimated that 3 million South Africans suffer from FAS.
- The Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR) says that people still believe that a woman had to be an alcoholic to give birth to a child with FAS. The truth is, however, that no amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy. All pregnant mothers who use (not necessarily abuse) alcohol during pregnancy are at risk of procreating a baby with abnormal signs and symptoms.
- The reality confronting us is that alcohol abuse is causing havoc in our families, our communities, and the nation. The media headlines too often tell the ugly yet sobering and devastating stories of our young babies who are increasingly falling victim to FASD because of alcohol and substance abuse.
- Alcohol is a major contributory factor which so often results in poverty, crime, reduced productivity, dysfunctional family life, and escalation of chronic diseases. Hence, it needs to be dealt with, with the urgency it deserves and in a pragmatic and holistic manner. And therefore, no effort must be spared to educate the public on the responsible consumption of liquor as well as its related harms.
- Underage drinking is one of the major challenges we must deal with. We also have the unfortunate situation where many pregnant women ignore health warnings of the dire consequences of alcohol consumption during pregnancy which may lead to the development of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder.
- The objectives of the FASD Research and Prevention Programme are clear and set out the contribution and role that communities and civil society at large must play in fighting the scourge of alcohol and

substance abuse. It highlights the need for a significant contribution by all to deal with the destructive force that is alcohol abuse.

PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE:

1. On 27 November 2012, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, South African Breweries, and the Eastern Cape Department of Local Government & Traditional Affairs (DPLGTA). It constituted an operational partnership in the Nelson Mandela Bay.
2. It envisaged to support good governance, service delivery and economic development in the Nelson Mandela Bay, and it was in large measure due to the endeavors of partners like the SAB and the DPLGTA, under whose patronage it was established. I would also venture to say that it was a collective effort and partnership that would facilitate and enable the Nelson Mandela Bay to move forward towards a shared and interactive future. It was indeed a very exciting time for the Nelson Mandela Bay and the Eastern Cape.
3. Hence the purpose of the MoU, as stated, is a substantive undertaking to establish a strategic partnership between the parties and form the framework for future interaction, participation and co-operation in: engendering close working relationships between SAB, NMBM and DLGTA to share and inform each other on specific “adoption” initiatives; exchanging information regarding policies, strategies and on service delivery challenges experienced by the NMBM; and exploring opportunities and possibilities to enable parties to respond effectively to joint programmes/initiatives.
4. There can be no doubt that the Nelson Mandela Bay is a great metropolitan city in every sense. It is a combination of economic and cultural strengths, which makes us attractive for businesses, workers, and tourists from all over the globe.
5. However, no one would question that the Nelson Mandela Bay is currently facing several serious challenges. The challenge for all of us is to make the most of our strengths to keep ourselves ahead of the challenging social and economic environment.
6. We would like to do so in a way that benefits all our Metro citizens. History shows us that simply relying on the wealth created by the trickle-down effect will not work.
7. Local Government together with business has a crucial role to play in addressing societal issues, through ensuring that the building blocks are in place to provide better and more focused and strategic leadership at the local sphere on key issues such as socio-economic development and importantly that of the health and wellbeing of our future generations. Hence. I called this meeting with the SAB in the hope that it will give credence and impetus to my visit here today and at the same time discuss the pervasive problem of the high rate of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome in the Northern Areas.
8. Some of the challenges our Metro faces are mounting population pressures, expansion, low employment levels, high levels of poverty, housing shortages and outdated infrastructure. However, the opportunities for economic and social development are well documented and our productivity and growth rates indicate that we are lagging other major cities in South Africa.

9. In fact, our City Development Strategy is leveraged on partners like the SAB by taking advantage of the opportunities that are available within the SAB. It is a joint plan for sustainable socio-economic development and its implementation based on measured targeted action. A strategy that has the potential to help create a Nelson Mandela Bay that we would all like to live in, work in and enjoy ourselves. A Nelson Mandela Bay that the world wants to visit and benchmark.
10. The MoU between the NMBM, SAB & DPLGTA dovetails our developmental strategy by considering the economic and social challenges in our Metro and it must be mentioned that this was because of joint efforts by both government and business.
11. Thus, in my capacity as Executive Mayor, I can take an inveterate interest in the whole range of issues and interests that effect socio-economic development in the Nelson Mandela Bay.
12. Importantly, this MoU is dedicated to making sure that the Nelson Mandela Bay becomes one of the world's leading productive, sustainable, and inclusive cities. It is a known fact that the SAB contributes to our success in the Nelson Mandela Bay and central to delivering on our mandate. Because of the SAB expertise and extensive social corporate investment, we can win the battle against FAS in our communities. If we all work together, we can change the condition of our communities and this magnificent city for the better.
13. As we know the mushrooming of illegal outlets selling liquor – with no respect for set regulations is a bone of contention which makes it extremely difficult to protect vulnerable sections of our communities from its negative consequences.
14. We are therefore expected to collectively encourage and create a culture of activism where communities are aware of their rights and laws relating to the sale and consumption of alcohol which in turn will ensure that they have influence in the process of adjudicating on the outcome of liquor permits.
15. We therefore encourage a proactive citizenry and business environment that would not allow illegal trading that causes social instability by reporting impropriety and abuse in our communities.
16. The SAB we know is one of the major contributors to our economy and state coffers and this illustrates the impact and influence the industry has on our socio-economic lives. And because of this, the SAB is paramount in terms of ensuring oversight and that we have the necessary legislative and policy mechanisms in place to ensure that there is responsible trade and consumption of alcohol to minimize and prevent unintended consequences such as FAS.
17. The objectives of this initiative are clear and set out the contribution and role that communities and civil society at large must play. It highlights the need for a significant contribution by all stakeholders and a multi-disciplinary approach which is a fundamental prerequisite to ensure proper regulation and control.
18. As local government in the Nelson Mandela Bay, we must strike the balance between giving business the space and importantly to deal with the unintended consequences.
19. We will certainly harness our collective resources towards enhancing the local government agenda by working constructively with SAB and all relevant stakeholders in advancing the interests of our municipality which will primarily focus on improving capacity in critical areas on key aspects.

20. This is indeed a massive opportunity to complement our municipal turn-around strategy in our quest to ease pressure areas that will assist in strengthening our development capacity and improve service delivery in the Nelson Mandela Bay.
21. I am wholly confident that through our partnership we will definitely gain momentum and dynamism as we seek to foster a closer working relationship between ourselves and the private sector and in this instance, SAB, that will allow us to develop joint initiatives to assist our municipality in improving social issues impacting our communities, deal with governance challenges and address issues of local economic development while at the same time contribute to job creation and provision of critical skills.
22. We invite the SAB to join us in this ennobling programme to build positive futures in our communities by significantly reducing birth defects and mental disabilities caused by alcohol consumption during pregnancy.
23. As part of our collective social responsibility, we must increase awareness and vigilance and to encourage responsible and vigilant communities. We all have an inveterate role to play in our common quest to create a society based on sound moral and ethical values of dignity and respect.
24. And proudly, I must give my personal cheers to the world's largest brewer, our very own global brewing giant South African Breweries!

We thank you.