

SPEECH POINTS BY COUNCILLOR RETIEF ODENDAAL

HONOURABLE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF THE NELSON MANDELA BAY MUNICIPALITY

TO: 24TH WORKING WORLD EXHIBITION 2023

TUESDAY, 14 MARCH 2023, FEATHERMARKET CENTRE AT 08H30

Programme Director:

- *Mr Andrew Binning (CEO: Inkanyezi Events)*
- *All Social Partners*
- *Educators & Learners*
- *Distinguished Guests*
- *Members of the Media*
- *(All protocol observed)*

Greetings!

I am delighted to share with you in this very important career guidance initiative, the 24th edition of the Working World Exhibition, meant to stimulate and open the minds and doors to a brighter future for learners in the NMB.

I would therefore like to thank the CEO of Inkanyezi, Mr Andrew Binning, for the opportunity to share my thoughts with all the participants here at the 24th Chapter of the Career Expo.

Allow me also to express my profound gratitude to the educational institutions and business', amongst others, who have committed to positively shaping the decisions school-leavers make concerning their study and work futures through this annual initiative of the Inkanyezi. And thank you for your massive contribution and enthusiasm all of which are helping to propel our metro's future human capital and socio-economic prosperity.

I am pleased to see that so many students and school learners are present here for the opening of the Career Expo, a platform that certainly provides a unique opportunity for engagement, networking and potential partnerships between employers and future employees.

As learners you are about to make one of the most important decisions of your life which is likely going to be the first step towards a successful career. Employers are joining the race for what you can offer them which makes it difficult to decide where the best start of your career should be. I believe that your first employer often determines the path of your career and can leave a lasting impact on your life. Therefore, do not take this decision lightly

Few would disagree that the future prosperity of our city depends on the talents, skills, and creativity of our young people. Our challenge – and opportunity – is to build the best trained youth corps that can rise to any challenge. For this to become reality, it is imperative that we do our utmost to prepare our younger generation. At the same time, we believe in the talents in every learner, and that everyone should have the opportunity to develop such talents and grasp whatever chances life has in store for them.

To prepare our young people to meet the challenges and opportunities in a knowledge-based economy, we cannot work alone in grooming the talents for the future of the Nelson Mandela Bay. All stakeholders, especially the businesses and enterprises, have an indispensable role to play by providing training and internship opportunities

for our young people to supplement their studies and have a first-hand experience of the various career paths. I therefore appeal to you for support in this regard!

The Careers Expo, which has now established itself as an annual event in providing up to date information on further, studies, training and career avenues through exhibitions, seminars, forums and career video shows in the next few days, learners and job seekers will better understand the education and career opportunities available within the municipality.

We know that young people, especially school leavers, invariably face difficulties in finding suitable jobs because of their lack of work experience. As the NMBM we will therefore continue to equip our young people with updated latest labour market information and step-up efforts in helping those who have difficulty adjusting to an increasingly knowledge-based economy through education and training. We will also help school leavers to pursue continuing education and provide an environment conducive to lifelong learning.

It is my sincere hope that your interaction at this career expo will yield positive results for both employers and learners. Because, the significance of such career exhibitions cannot be overstated, particularly in relation to school going learners. Bringing learners to this career expo does not only expose the learners to employment and academic programmes available, but also give insight to learners what happens in the world of work.

Amid our high unemployment, employers still face challenges filling technical and skilled jobs. Research shows that there are global forces that are reshaping the talent landscape which require a need to rethink talent attraction, development, and retention especially now with the demands of the 4th Industrial Revolution and Artificial Intelligence. These forces are driving change for both human resources and organisations, creating talent challenges and potential solutions radically different from those faced by previous generations.

We now live in a world in which half of today's jobs did not exist three decades ago and universities and colleges, by themselves, simply cannot fully prepare students for jobs that don't exist. To close the skills gap, higher education institutions will need to work more closely with industry to promote job-skill alignment, combining labour market data with industry input to define the skills likely to be needed for tomorrow's jobs.

This is an effort we cannot achieve if as stakeholders we work in silos; we need to work together. There is a definite need for closer cooperation between the schools, the universities, and employers and the NMBM to ensure seamless transitions at all levels as we build a workforce that would be able to drive a thriving economy.

To the learners, I say, exhibitors will be disseminating a lot of information about their organisations and companies. Do take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about career paths and career options that are available. Acquaint yourself with what they have to offer and collect the information that you receive from the various exhibitors because this might be the building blocks to making a decision on your future career path.

I would like to encourage all our learners, to seize the opportunities that are available to you at this expo, to broaden your horizons and venture into career paths which would add much value and alleviate the demand for scarce skills. The future is yours to shape and to harness and I have no doubt that through this initiative, you are well placed to do so.

I trust that the comprehensive information available to you at this Career Expo will assist our young people in mapping a suitable career path, in pursuit of either further education or careers.

Finally, I wish the 24th Working World Exhibition exponential success.