

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS POINTS BY COUNCILLOR RETIEF ODENDAAL
THE HONOURABLE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF THE NELSON MANDELA BAY
MUNICIPALITY
TO: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF DISCOVER MANDELA BAY (DMB)
WEDNESDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 2022, CITY HALL AT 10H00**

Programme Director:

- *Mr Andrew Steward: Chairperson of Discover Mandela Bay*
- *Mr Shaun Van Eck: CEO of Discover Mandela Bay*
- *Affiliates/Members of Discover Mandela Bay*
- *Tourism Industry Stakeholders*
- *Tourism Practitioners*
- *Tourism Ambassadors*
- *Distinguished Guests*
- *Members of the Media*
- *Ladies and Gentlemen*
- *All Protocol Observed*

Good Morning!

Thank you for the opportunity to share in your AGM. Yes, the multi-party coalition would certainly build on the strong partnership with the DMB, and it is my intention to strengthen our relationship with the leisure and tourism industry in the Nelson Mandela Bay. We are open to new ideas and certainly open for business so that we can develop a booming, inclusive and resilient tourism sector. This is crucial for our economy.

Looking back at the last two years, the pandemic and the geopolitical climate have certainly caused havoc in our lives, our businesses, the tourism industry in particular and not to mention our physical and mental health and many small and medium, locally owned enterprises. These are some of the realities sector players face as we seek to chart a purposeful progress towards recovery. We don't have the luxury of time!

Whilst there is no doubt that the decline in tourist activity was mostly beyond our control, there is also no doubt that our local state of affairs in the sector have had a negative impact on stakeholders in the industry, in particular for vacation rentals, independent restaurants, transportation providers, and attractions

As we all know, global tourism suffered its worst years in recorded history, with international arrivals dropping dramatically due to an unprecedented fall in demand and travel restrictions. That is all behind us now and the time is ripe to overhaul and put our tourism sector at the top of our agenda in the NMB.

We must renew and develop new partnerships, which brings together, the NMBM, DMB, private sector and relevant entities/stakeholders to explore new tourism offerings and linkages that would drastically assist us with reworking our brand that will create traction and renew interest in what we have to offer as an investment and tourism destination.

Now is the time to rethink the tourism sector and the contribution it can make to our local economy and the natural environment an opportunity to build better towards a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient tourism sector that ensure the benefits of tourism are enjoyed widely and fairly. We need to address the inequalities and create not only a more responsible and resilient but also a fairer hospitality and tourism industry with equal opportunities for all.

It presents an opportunity, but it requires us to take a hard look at our tourism industry. Whether we call it responsible tourism or regenerative tourism, our tourism industry of the future must – more than ever – embrace the full spectrum of operating sustainably beginning with the protection and preservation of the environment and our marine and coastal environments, allowing for maximum economic benefit to stay in the NMB and facilitating the traveler’s exposure to its community and its history, art, and culture.

We should give serious thought to the type of tourism development we want to welcome to our shores in future and ensure that any such development embrace and adapt the Global Standards of Nature Based solutions.

Our natural attributes, which include a favorable climate, beautiful beaches, coastal splendor, game reserves together with our legendary hospitality, are ideal ingredients for a successful tourism and hospitality destination. This all the reason why our tourism industry will continue to play a major part in our economy for generations to come.

An example is to increase direct air routes and new and existing route expansions by introducing new airlines from across the globe that will contribute to direct tourism spend in the foreseeable future. We must put our heads together with urgency.

I firmly believe that we have a tourism sector with massive potential to change our unemployment crises and to give hope to our people and young people in particular.

We must re-establish our links with investors and hotel groups to change perception though their involvement to expand investment in new and existing properties; transport operators and tour guides must be given support and training as frontline ambassadors of our city.

In their 2020 Economic Impact Report, the World Travel & Tourism Council, clearly stated that International Travel & Tourism, and particularly, international spend, is vital to support the job creation from mega-cities to rural communities.

Research indicates that for every 34 international visitors to a destination, one new job is created. And for every direct job globally, nearly two jobs are created on an indirect or induced basis, so with one direct job in Travel & Tourism effectively creating a total of three jobs.

Additionally, diversity in the travel ecosystem, as it relates to race, gender, sexual orientation, culture, religion, and physical ability, is fundamental to the success of businesses, the meaningful impact on communities, and the improved experience of travelers.

Small and medium size businesses in the industry must be given the necessary support in offering unique experiences, including cuisine, culture, and sport, for visitors to enjoy.

The DMB, as a promoting entity is critical in this regard especially given the stiff competition in the industry. There is much work to be done over the next few months to unblock the tourism sector – and the hospitality sector in the NMB.

We must look at eliminating unnecessary red tape so that we can effectively deal with systemic issues and bring about wide changes to unblock existing challenges in the tourism and hospitality industry in the Nelson Mandela Bay.

The tourism industry in the NMB, and by extension the hospitality industry, who are emerging from the Covid-19, now face many challenges, which is crime levels and a broken and filthy city environment. This

dysfunction is changing daily for the better. We must get our policing strategy right by ensuring visible policing and oversight by SAPS and NMB Metro police.

We must look at establishing a tourism safety unit, which is focused on hotspots, supporting victims, technology and innovative solutions to tourist safety.

Provide inputs into policymaking as we develop a tourism policy crafted to create a framework for success in the development, marketing, management, and monitoring of tourism in the NMB.

Post-pandemic travelers are thinking more about environmental impact of their holidays and how the communities they visit benefit from tourism. The NMB is primed to benefit from this trend.

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the shape of global travel and the demands of tourists. They are looking for something different.

Tourists now favour flexibility and want to stay for longer, mixing business with pleasure, according to a trend study conducted by the Association of South African Travel Agents (ASATA). More focused on experiential and sustainability stays. Sustainability efforts and initiatives are often a huge deciding factor for many customers.

Instead of simply going on holiday, today's leisure travelers want to learn and grow whilst giving back to the people and places they encounter during their travels. It is important to develop an understanding for and deliver on the sustainability drivers of leisure travel.

The growing sustainability trend – also referred to as responsible or regenerative tourism. The Tourism Grading Council of SA (TGCSA) has identified responsible tourism as a priority and hold establishments to high standards in terms of water, waste and energy management, conservation, and interaction with local communities

Tourism is more than living your best life on holiday with family and friends. It is about inclusive economic growth, massive job creation and exports. It is about trade, travel for business, aviation, accommodation, and restaurants.

We must build on your know-how and strengthen our partnership with the DMB – to develop workplace skills for people, especially young people.

We look forward to your input in this regard!

We urge that you work closely with the new administration to find new innovative ways to ensure that we dramatically turn around things for the good of the industry and our city coffers.

We are open to new ideas and committed to working with the incoming board of the NMBT and turning our partnership into an even stronger and more prosperous future.

Going forward, I know that we will be able to continue with our outreach and go the extra mile to explore new horizons and devise new strategies to ensure the maximum output of a burgeoning tourism industry in the NMB.

There are so many amazing opportunities yet to be fully explored and included in our tourism destination product. I look forward to ongoing dialogue how we will develop and promote our many hidden treasures

The only course of action for us is to look forward with purpose and continue our collaboration as an industry to help our progress towards recovery and success.

I want to thank the DMB for their collaboration as we chart our way forward. We may not always agree but I know, we are all in with our heart and soul with the singular intent of making our city safe, welcoming and prosperous again!

We thank you.