

PRESS RELEASE



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Chamber and Bay's church leadership discuss activism and action to drive positive change in the Metro

The Chamber hosted religious leaders from a broad spectrum of church formations in the city to find synergies in order to work collectively as a wider and inclusive civil society in addressing some of the challenges facing Nelson Mandela Bay's economy and communities.

The engagement, which was initiated by the churches, also sought to provide the group with insight into the Chamber's proactive business activism, in response to the radically changed environment for businesses. It was informed by a need to understand the Chamber's interventions and the importance of strong collective and united leadership to drive positive change in the city.

Driven by unity of purpose and action, the team agreed to use their collective muscle to re-orientate the city's victim mentality by working towards pulling down the silo mentality within their formations to positively influence the city towards a functional trajectory.

Churches represented at the meeting included the Father's House Church, Uniting Presbyterian Church of SA, Transformation Christian Network, Harvest Church, Anglican Church, Roman Catholic Church, Methodist Church, Ebenezer International, Dutch Reformed Church and the Apostolic Faith Mission.

Chamber chief executive Denise van Huyssteen presented the Chamber's strategic priorities, which are driven by its task teams, clusters, and various strategic partnerships and linkages through action orientated collaborative efforts both locally and nationally with a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

"We have to recognise that we are operating in an era of global, national and local instability and polycrisis. This requires a radical mind-shift to becoming a vibrant civil society where we embrace a new era of collaboration. This becomes even more important considering the current energy and logistics challenges as well as lack of service delivery, that an approach of collaboration and innovation is required to support the economic survival of local businesses," said Van Huyssteen.

Van Huyssteen also shared some of her key learnings in her role in driving change which are underpinned by a clearly defined strategy and priorities, backed by strong leadership and fast decision making.

"We need to stay positive and focus on what's within your control. The shift in our mind-set should be orientated towards helping the Bay to shift from being a victim of politics to becoming an

enabling metro. By working together, we can spread the load and learn from each other. More importantly, we need to build hope through unity of purpose and action in order to retain and attract much needed investment and jobs in our metro,” she said.

She further encouraged the youth to participate in community upliftment programmes and be part of the movement to create a vibrant civil society. This is particularly important, given that 72% of youth between the ages of 18-28 in the Bay are unemployed. Beyond this, other spheres of our community, institutions of learning and NGOs need to become much more active in driving positive action. .

“As a business organisation, we remain impartial both from a political and religious perspective, and our efforts are focused around collaborating with civil society as a whole for the greater good of the metro and its people.”

Commenting during the engagement, Lead Pastor at Father’s House Church George Georgiou echoed Van Huyssteen’s sentiments, emphasising the importance of different church structures coming together and working as a unit, not in silos.

“We have much to learn from the Chamber and how it has managed to find synergies with different stakeholders where the focus is on addressing some of the key challenges facing the city and our communities at large. The need for strong leadership becomes imperative in a society where there’s disintegration within communities and family structures. As leadership, we are encouraged by the work the Chamber has done and we need to do more in terms of coming together as a unit and change the city’s trajectory,” said Georgiou.

This collaboration between the Chamber and the various civil society stakeholders underscores the belief in the power of unity, purpose, and positive action to overcome challenges and bring about positive change in the Bay.

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About the Nelson Mandela Bay Business Chamber:

With around 700 member businesses and over 155 years of rich heritage, the Nelson Mandela Bay Business Chamber remains one of the most trusted, respected and authoritative voices on matters relating to local business and the economy. The environment we operate in is changing at a rapid pace and requires ongoing agility to ensure that we robustly respond to issues that impact upon the sustainability of local businesses, the functionality of the operating environment, leveraging economic growth opportunities, while simultaneously providing value-adding services to our members. For this reason, we have adopted a more activist, collaborative and action orientated approach in pursuing our vision of being the leading catalyst for Nelson Mandela Bay to retain and attract business.

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