



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Possible waterfront development for Nelson Mandela Bay Harbour**

At a public briefing yesterday (Thursday 25 November), Derick van der Merwe, former CEO of the V&A Waterfront spoke on the possibilities of a waterfront development for the port of Port Elizabeth.

Van der Merwe highlighted the many challenges the Cape Town Harbour was faced with before the development of the V&A waterfront could commence. He offered a number of approaches Port Elizabeth could take into consideration to follow the same route of a possible waterfront development that would benefit the people of Port Elizabeth.

He emphasised that in-depth market research looking at aspects from grass-roots level was necessary, this would incorporate the city as a whole and avoid issues of conflict which could possibly arise throughout the process. As for the Cape Town Harbour, this would include the issue of there being more than one land owner, long leases and dirty operations, and the removal of the tank farm as this posed a major obstacle through production of high levels of methane gas.

He mentioned the "ingredients" which unlocked the Cape Town Harbour development; this began with the establishment of single land ownership which could also be introduced in Port Elizabeth through a landowner forum. He said there was a need for a special planning regime to be created by the city and that it was necessary to take wider interest group opinions into account which includes that of the public. He said that such a project required the full support and involvement of all parties involved and that the development of the harbor should be done so with the public in mind.

The creation of a Ministers Liaison Committee gave the V&A Waterfront a platform to inform and solicit comments from all interest groups to pre-empt problems and avoid conflict; through the appointment of an efficient & representative Board (which includes the Port Manager, Ex Mayor, independent specialists etc.)

Van der Merwe said that 'a Flexible planning regime is needed to expedite the process and allow flexibility to divide the land into smaller precinct parcels.' He emphasized the need for 'open

dialogue'. "The harbor needs to be developed for the people of Port Elizabeth, they need to be involved in as many spheres as possible."

He spoke on the many possibilities of what a waterfront could do for Nelson Mandela Bay's economy through the results of the development in Cape Town.

"Cape Town became a better City whereby the gravity of the City Central Business District (CBD) Development shifted towards the V&A."

This also opened doors to the establishment of the Cape Town International Convention Centre, developed at the entrance to the V&A, as well as major hotel developments around the perimeter of the V&A. The V&A waterfront area became a 'financial district' which revived the CBD and connected with the V&A. The Development of upper end residential developments followed around the V&A which created a major increase in the rates bill of the city because of the high value of the development.

"To drive development serious businesses is needed and tenants must pay rent. The economy will grow because people move around, this will have a snowball effect that will change the dynamics."

Van der Merwe said the construction of the waterfront together with the possibilities of shops, restaurants, residential premises could lead to more jobs being created which has a ripple effect on the economy creating sustainability as this will lead to an upward spiral with more people having money to spend. He however pointed out that it was necessary to start small and use old buildings that are available and build on that.

*The Executive Mayor Zanoxolo Wayile addressed the issues the metro faced and that 'the way forward is for government, businesses, trade unions and the public to collaborate in their efforts to work together towards a defined vision'.*

*The National Government appointed the Burggraaf Committee to make recommendations on the treatment of the underutilised and economically obsolete parts of all South African Harbours. Approved by parliament it was recommended that the same recommendation be made for all Harbours. This included the following: any development in the harbour would have to look at the redevelopment of the harbour into a mixed use area, a focus on tourism and residential development was required and most importantly, the retaining of the working harbour and keeping it in operation.*

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