



MBDA ADVERTORIAL ON CARETAKING THE BAY'S 'COLISEUM'

LUVUYO BANGAZI

MANDELA BAY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY MARKETING AND
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

THE Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium is firmly embedded in the landscape and fabric of the city as a multi-purpose stadium for sporting, entertainment and special events. This is evidenced in what is now a long history of game-changing events, and a bright new future which lies ahead.

In the context of New Year and with a new challenge ahead of us as the custodian of the Bay's coliseum,

I thought it would be fitting to reflect on how MBDA, with residents and ratepayers of the metro and local authorities, will be making this landmark work in a sustainable manner.

To begin, I am happy to report that the ship is sailing, and it is sailing smoothly without too many bumps.

We have retained more than 90% of the operational team and management team from the previous operator;

we preserved elements of operational efficiency and also a degree of institutional memory. This means that those who are familiar with the gears, levers and inner-workings – spanning across operations, maintenance, security and marketing – have been retained and absorbed as employees of the MBDA. The team is motivated and ready for a new chapter.

This year, we are determined to attract and develop sporting and other events. In short, we will take this space and make it a place that the city can be proud of – a building only has value when people engage with it and feel they 'own' the space.

As we look to the future, we need to work collectively to ensure the stadium maintains its status and performs its role as a critical centre-point for economic development, community building and social cohesion, sports development, and events. Development is complex and cannot happen in an exclusively linear way. When the houses and roads are built, where will the children play, what would they watch, what they would do, he asked – and rightly so. The city we are building today cannot afford a linear approach. Our world is sticky and intricate – and planning needs to reflect this. Already, the stadium has unlocked opportunities the city would never have been able to tap into before it was built.

MBDA has been readying the inner city through upgraded urban infrastructure for a tourism and investment boom. Complex development is at play and the stadium has always been an integral part of this process. MBDA is now the caretaker of the stadium. We take this role very seriously and will work tirelessly to ensure that the stadium moves toward break-even and hosts events that appeal to wide audiences.

We have also maintained a dual vision that expands past the circumference of the sports ground to take advantage of our unique positioning.

The Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium, flanked by two bodies of water, the North End Lake and the ocean, not only offers a world-class sporting facility but can deliver beyond the borders of the stadium and include water sports. To this end, a major sports precinct is on the cards, which could result in an influx of additional niche sporting events on the neighbouring North End Lake. We will be making more announcements soon in this regard.

Vision and implementation now need to merge – and this can only happen through collaboration. As caretakers, we have been at the coal-face of both planning and application. There is a solid base on which we together can raise the roof and ensure our modern gladiatorial contests and public spectacles have a place to call home in Nelson Mandela Bay.