

PUBLIC HEARING ON TRANSFORMATION OF TOURISM INDUSTRY  
15 MAY 2007  
COMMITTEE ROOM: V475, FOURTH FLOOR, OLD ASSEMBLY WING  
PAPER TO BE PRESENTED BY THOPE LEKAU, MANAGER  
KOPANONG B&B

06

Re: Transformation of the Tourism Industry

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Portfolio Committee for inviting us to a Public Hearing on the Transformation of the Tourism Industry. This is the democracy that benefits all citizens we have looked forward to and can be proud of celebrating in South Africa. Where the contribution of ordinary citizens are valued enough to be invited to Parliament to provide input and feedback regarding Government policies and programs..

I was initially reluctant to submit a paper regarding Transformation of the Tourism Industry to the Parliament Portfolio Committee. The reason being the short notice given to me to do so as issues or inherent challenges concerning the topic warrant far more reflection and evaluation than what the time allows. For those who may not be aware, most entrepreneurs who are involved in tourism businesses work seven days a week until late at night and a commitment to ensure excellence with often-limited resources is an exhausting process most of the time.

Needless to say that my programme was fully booked for the weekend until this Monday afternoon and therefore would like to recommend that in future if constructive feedback is required from civil society, that citizens are notified sufficiently in advance not only to ensure an effective outcome but as a measure of respect for your valuable time as well..

However I do realize that this is a platform and opportunity to share my appreciation, concerns frustrations and experience on how I view what is called transformation in the tourism industry as product owner.

First, I would like to congratulate the government for all the transformation initiatives that are in place. The government policies are excellent including transformation policies in all the sectors. The concern however is the lack of monitoring the implementation of these policies to ensure stakeholders benefit from these valuable initiatives especially those located in Khayelitsha and other townships).

It is pointless setting aside huge budgets for transformation if there are no monitoring systems in place and mechanisms to ensure effective implementation as well as adequate distribution of information to the target market.

I am aware that DEAT is responsible for covering the following:

- Fast track skills development
- Accreditation for THETA providers
- Subside B&B, Guest Houses grading
- Train Tour Guides
- Provide tourism awareness etc
- Access to expansion funds

The transformation initiative is undoubtedly an essential one that has the potential of creating opportunities and providing skills to previously disadvantaged stakeholders in the Tourism Industry. It is however crucial that people have access to the relevant information to take advantage of these so how do we ensure that people gets access to the information.

Many consulting companies take advantage of funds; apply for training tenders to train people without researching what skills people require. Funds are secured and prior to the deadline reports are submitted to whoever provided them with funds. Consulting companies often facilitate tourism workshops without screening who wants to attend what workshop making it quite obvious that they provide the workshop to secure an attendance list as proof of having conducted a workshop and have no commitment to ensuring the transformation and development of skills. An evaluation of who attended these workshops and the materials provided would reveal that people knew nothing about tourism and were not interested. Some want to start businesses on Building Construction rather than tourism while on the other hand youth and women are continuously knocking at our doors requesting assistance to start B&B, to become Tour Guides, open catering companies and general tourism awareness.

Proper consultation involving contacting people who are already in the industry will certainly prevent the waste of funds being exploited by consultants who lack integrity and have no commitment towards effective transformation and nation building. Effective intervention measures will also prevent the government from being criticised for the failure to transform the industry while under the illusion that they are providing adequate skills development programs.

It is essential for all concerned to do proper consultation prior to executing workshops and skills development programs.

With regards to BEE, Many people are unclear on how the BEE Score Card operates and how we can benefit. A user friendly explanation would be an invaluable document to disseminate to relevant role-players and stakeholders

For transformation to be effective we need to come up with an effective strategy of how to transform predominantly white stakeholders in the tourism industry. We are well aware that it continues to be an exclusive industry, controlled by a few who are still not interested in involving us. While these exclusive few continue to benefit so much from tourism they are the one's who frighten our guests when they want to come to the townships. **The Hotel Frontline Staff and Managers, Guest Houses, Backpackers Owners, Restaurants and Car Hiring Companies.**

**To conclude I would like to recommend the following:**

1. For a survey to be conducted documenting all tourist related initiatives owned by previously disadvantaged citizens which can be used to determine training, resource and funding requirements.
2. That representatives from government, tourist businesses owned by previously disadvantaged citizens and training consultants meet to evaluate the transformation process to date, brainstorm an intervention strategy, compile guidelines as to a processes that can ensure more effective transformation takes place
3. That an easy to understand explanation of the BEE score card and ways in which small tourist businesses can benefit, be compiled and disseminated to people through existing tourist venues, NGO's, CBO's etc

Thank you once again for the invitation and opportunity to share and provide input into the topic. I trust that although brief, the severity of the issues and challenges and the negative impact of these will continue to have on the transformation process in the industry will not fall on deaf ears. There are many previously disadvantaged citizens throughout the country dedicated to tourism and at great financial, emotional and physical sacrifice pursuing tourist related businesses based on governments efforts to promote tourism. Parliament as custodians have a crucial role to play in ensuring that these efforts are not wasted and that democracy truly work for all.