

## **MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE OFFICE OF MR MARTHINUS VAN SCHALKWYK, MINISTER OF TOURISM**

Minister invites Hospitality students for orientation at the One&Only Hotel

The 2011 academic year is off to a good start for 30 FET (further education and training) college students. They were invited to an orientation with a difference by Marthinus van Schalkwyk, Minister of Tourism.

As part of his vision to grow tourism in South Africa, the Minister along with the FET college students studying Tourism and Hospitality went on a walkabout through the prestigious One&Only Hotel in Cape Town to be shown the various practical aspects of tourism and hospitality management.

Tourism is a people-centred service industry, where staff forms an integral part of the consumer experience. Therefore, tourism must look to the people working in the industry to serve as a principal source of competitive advantage. In short, the skills, know-how and conduct of those working in the industry must have the so-called 'x factor' – something unique that will set the South African tourism product apart from the offering of competitor countries. Of course, this will not happen overnight. Securing competitive advantage through people requires careful and deliberate investment in the education and training of the tourism workforce.

To develop the required skills among its workforce, tourism relies heavily on providers of further and higher education. However, the education sector itself could be a somewhat congested space, with quite a number of overlapping courses and service providers. In 2007, a significant number of students received tourism-related education awards. Some of these awards were made to those students following courses through FET colleges, while others went to graduates from universities and technikons. Co-operation is improving between the tourism industry and higher education institutions to ensure that tourism training is addressed and receives the relevant priority so that it demonstrates industry relevance.

As tourism depends considerably on the craft skills of its workforce, and the quality and range of these skills will largely determine whether the tourism workforce will emerge as a key source of sustainable competitive advantage, it is important that the relationship between industry and training providers is carefully maintained. Tourism workers need to continue receiving the further education and training they need as well as be afforded the opportunity to progress to higher education programmes, where appropriate.

In this regard, the 2006 skills audit report revealed that the essential skills required to ensure the competitiveness of the sector include culinary, language and managerial skills as well as important attributes such as passion and enthusiasm. Through this initiative, the Minister hopes to inspire those working in the tourism and hospitality industry to continue expanding their skills base, as well as emphasise the key role of both industry and training providers to equip the tourism workforce with relevant skills to give South African tourism the edge over its competitors.

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