

"2010 could be a knife in the back"

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"Western Cape companies are thinking too small." This was the message from The Western Cape Investment and Trade Promotion Agency (Wesgro) at the launch of their International Trade Team at the BMW Pavilion at the Waterfront on Thursday night, 29 January 2009.



Peter Hurst, Head of International Trade at Wesgro, has just returned from seven years in the United Kingdom where he was the South Africa Specialist for the last two years at UK Trade & Investment. Among other pointed observations, his speech highlighted the dangers of focusing too narrow-mindedly on the 2010 World Cup. "The kinds of people who are going to come to the World Cup are business leaders - MDs, CEOs. Their wives have looked at the value of their insurance policies and said, 'Sure Honey, off you go'," said Hurst, making light of the over-hyped perception that South Africa is crime-ridden. "These guys have probably never been here before. But they're going to get to Cape Town and see this beautiful place, the people, the potential... And then they're going to look at our businesses and say, 'You guys are asleep. I'll take that bit of business, thank you very much.' 2010 could be a knife in the back."

The message is loud and clear. It's time for Western Cape business to mature. We need to consolidate our advantage in our own country and we need to become global players. The gaps in export are not only in raw goods and commodities, but in manufactured goods, services and the creative industries too. "Western Cape companies need to give up the 'island mentality'," said Hurst. "That's a legacy of apartheid. We're not isolated anymore, we're part of the global economy. How many of you are thinking beyond 2010? How many are pitching to supply 2012 - the Olympic Games in London? Some of you are; more of you should be."

Hurst was speaking to representatives from a wide range of businesses and organisations: from cultivated abalone exporters to pan-African recruitment agencies, from solar water geyser manufacturers to bulk wine packagers, from Lloyds TSB to Woolworths. Topco was thrilled to have a very visible presence at the event last night, especially as we're working on the launch of a publication showcasing the best of what the province has to offer business: *The Western Cape Top 300 Companies*. With distribution through embassies, international trade shows, trade missions and other international channels, *The Western Cape Top 300 Companies* offers worldwide visibility. The glossy publication is a persuasive calling card when initiating business with offshore partners. Featuring the cream of the province's businesses, *The Western Cape Top 300 Companies* creates a world-class impression of a globally renowned region. The Western Cape is set to attract a global spotlight: will you be standing in it?

For more information on *The Western Cape Top 300 Companies* contact Editor Michelle Matthews at . For sales enquiries contact Ralf Fletcher at or on 021 791 7100.

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