

SAIMI appoints Vanessa Davidson as deputy CEO

The South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI) has appointed Vanessa Davidson as deputy chief executive officer (CEO) in charge of strategic projects.



Vanessa Davidson

Davidson, who is the outgoing chief executive of the Maritime Industry Association of South Africa (MIASA), will be liaising with all the government departments and organisations involved in the oceans economy in order to provide a link between government policy-makers and the maritime industry.

SAIMI provides a link between industry and skills training and academic institutions to ensure that the education curriculum meets the needs of the maritime sector.

“Vanessa’s appointment will strengthen the SAIMI team and will help us to fast-track the Operation Phakisa deliverables,” says SAIMI CEO Prof Malek Pourzanjani.

Skills training - key to future growth

Davidson believes skills training remains the key to future growth in the marine manufacturing sector: “Worldwide, we need to look at how we provide specialist skills training and education to keep pace with new innovations in materials, work processes and equipment.

“I think each maritime sub-sector has different skills challenges, but there are at least three commonalities: First is a need for a strong schooling base for entry into tertiary education, or directly into semi-skilled work. Secondly, a quality tertiary baseline followed by industry-driven specialisation. Thirdly, there must be progression and an employment pipeline into supervisory and middle management opportunities. This is important to drive transformation at an ownership level,” she says.

“Operation Phakisa will create jobs, provided that it encourages investment by the private sector. The private sector will make the necessary investments if the government ensures that supporting programmes and legislation are in place,” she says.

Long-term investment needed

But, she adds, a long-term investment in people is needed to grow the maritime sector. “There is a lag time between training and development and industry growth. As a result, it is important to address the marine skills landscape now and create a pool of suitably qualified, experienced and passionate people who drive more growth in the sector, in the medium to long term”.

“I believe that the credibility of SAIMI depends upon establishing strong trust relationships with delivery partners in a non-partisan manner, as well as ensuring transparency, effective collaboration and very importantly, strong communication efforts both with delivery partners and national and international role players”.

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