

# Western Cape Bar

Contributed by Gregory Solik

## WESTERN CAPE BAR AND BENCH

In early 2023, the Cape Bar Council took the liberty of offering to the Acting Judge President Goliath the Cape Bar's willingness to act *pro bono* in appropriate matters to reduce the court's backlog. This offer was accepted.

The AJP indicated that assistance was required to clear backlogs in respect of the following matters: criminal appeals,

default judgments, Rule 46A applications, dormant / striking-off matters, divorces and civil motions.

As at June 2023, over 40 silks and ordinary members put their names forward to assist with reducing the backlog on a *pro bono* basis. This was in addition to the 17 silks and ordinary members who acted during the last term.

The Western Cape Bar wishes to extend its thanks to its members for their assistance, and to AJP Goliath and Acting Deputy Judge President Le Grange for leading this initiative, which has served to promote the administration of justice and strengthen the relationship between the bar and the bench.

## BRIDGING THE GAP SPEED NETWORKING CAPE TOWN

The majority of the 2022/23 Junior Bar Council's (JBC) committee members completed pupillage during 2020, amid the nationwide lockdown, and have seen first-hand how the 2020 class of pupils were essentially alienated from the entire fraternity. Nearly three years later, the pupils of 2020 (now third-year members) are still meeting fellow members at social gatherings for the first time and have realised that a very clear disconnect between colleagues still exists.

The 2022/23 JBC's primary objective was therefore transformation; more specifically, how it could facilitate the transformation committee's Access to Work policy. Creative problem solving led to the Junior/Senior Networking Event – hosted 02 March 2023 at the Pepper Club Hotel.

How this event worked:

- a. Silks were sent an invite to RSVP for the event in order to have booklets made of all the junior members in attendance.
- b. junior members were invited to attend the event and submit an information sheet about themselves, which included:
  - i. a photo of the junior member;
  - ii. prior experience or career before joining the Bar;
  - iii. what areas they practice in and how long they have been at the Bar;
  - iv. areas of interest in which they have not been afforded an opportunity to practice or learn in.



- c. Each silk who attended received a printed and bound booklet of each junior member's information sheet.
- d. Silks were allocated a table and the junior members were instructed to take up any open seat.
- e. Once everyone was seated, approximately three to four juniors per silk, were given five minutes to introduce themselves and refer to their information sheet.
- f. Every five minutes the junior members rotated to another silk's table. This continued until each junior member had personally introduced themselves to each silk in attendance.

This event was the first of its kind and, though not without a few hurdles along the way, was admirably received by everyone in attendance.

Though the purpose of the event was to introduce previously disadvantaged individual junior members to silks, all members of the junior bar were encouraged to attend, as the JBC is of the opinion that transformation does not occur

at the exclusion of certain members; it is with the inclusion and assistance of all.

The goal was simultaneously to assist silks with their transformation compliance requirements while also affording junior members the opportunity to farm themselves out to seniors whom they have not had the privilege of meeting and/or working for.

During the "musical-seats" portion of the evening, the room was filled with heaps of laughter and everyone was perceptibly enjoying the very informal introductions and meeting fellow colleagues.

After a full rotation of the five-minute introductory sessions, silks and junior members were free to mingle and talk as they pleased.

The JBC wants to thank the bar council for its endorsement and funding of this event, which has already led to multiple new senior/junior work opportunities.

The 2023/23 JBC looks forward to hosting another similar event during the third term of 2023. **A**