Winelands Echo

mdda MEDIA DEVELOPMENT & DIVERSITY AGENCY

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15 October 2026 VOL 17 EDITION 490 Tell: 066 521 6455

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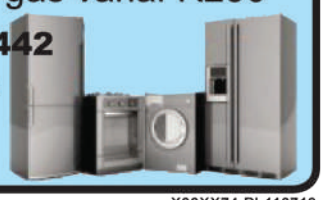

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STELLENBOSCH *KAYAMANDI*FRANSCHHOEK*PNIEL*SOMERSET-WEST *STRAND* PAARL *WELLINGTON*MBEKWENI*GOUDA*SARON HERMON*WORCESTER * CERES *NDULI* TULBACH*WOLSLEY*HAMLET*KLAPMUTS

WC Steps Up Water Planning Amid Climate Risks!

Berg river Dam

The Western Cape Government today brought together key water sector stakeholders to strengthen the province's response to growing water security challenges, including climate change, infrastructure vulnerabilities and the long-term impacts of recent floods.

Speaking at the Strategic Water Resilience Committee Workshop in Cape Town, the three spheres of government and water sector partners discussed priority actions needed to secure water supplies, protect critical infrastructure and improve resilience across communities, agriculture and the economy.

The workshop comes at a critical time for the province as municipalities continue to recover from severe weather events, while also preparing for future drought risks and increasing pressure on water resources. Discussions focused on strengthening coordination across government, accelerating investment in priority projects and ensuring that water resilience remains central to long-term development planning.

A key focus of the workshop was the significant investment currently being made to improve municipal water security. The Department of Local Government reported that more than R216 million is being invested in municipal water projects during the 2026/27 financial year through the Municipal Infrastructure Grant, Integrated Urban Development Grant and the provincial Water Resilience Programme. These investments support a range of interventions, including new water sources, treatment works upgrades, storage infrastructure, bulk pipelines and emergency water supply measures.

Stakeholders also examined opportunities to strengthen ecological infrastructure through catchment management, invasive alien vegetation clearing, water quality monitoring and nature-based solutions that help secure water resources while building resilience to climate change.

Presentations from the Department of Agriculture, Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, Department of Water and Sanitation, Breede-Olifants Catchment Management Agency, Department of Infrastructure and the City of Cape Town highlighted both progress and future investment opportunities aimed at diversifying water sources, reducing water-related risks and strengthening provincial water security.

Graham Paulse, Head of the Department of Local Government, said water resilience remains one of the province's most important strategic priorities.

"Water security is one of the most important resilience challenges facing our province. The strength of the Western Cape's response lies in collaboration across government, municipalities, water institutions and other partners. Today's discussions demonstrate our shared commitment to protecting water resources, strengthening infrastructure and ensuring that communities, businesses and agriculture are better prepared for future challenges."

The workshop reaffirmed the Western Cape Government's commitment to a whole-of-government approach to water resilience, recognising that reliable water supply is fundamental to service delivery, economic growth, human settlements development, disaster risk reduction and the wellbeing of residents throughout the province. The outcomes of the workshop will help inform future priorities and recommendations for consideration by the Provincial Water Security and Resilience PGMTEC.

BE LEKKER. RECYCLE.
A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Clean spaces are beautiful places. Help to keep the Cape Winelands District clean by recycling. Recyclable waste is collected from your doorstep once a week on collection day. It's a quick, free, and effective way to make a positive contribution.

WHAT ABOUT E-WASTE?
Do you have any unwanted electrical or electronic household appliances at home? Any equipment that requires electricity or batteries to work (TVs, cell phones, hairdryers, laptops, you get it) are not permitted in your recycling bag, but can be taken to your nearest Materials Recovery Facility.

Contact your local municipality to find out where your nearest MRF is.

WHAT! WE HAVE RECYCLING?
Yes! Your local municipality has a collection system where black bins and clear bags (containing recyclables) are collected once a week.

HOW DO I RECYCLE?
To recycle, place all your recyclables into the provided clear bag and place it next to your bin on collection day.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY RECYCLING?
Your separated recycling goes to our Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs) where our Waste Heroes sort the items according to type and then sell them on to be recycled and turned into new products! This supports the livelihoods of these Waste Heroes, while also ensuring valuable items do not end up in landfill.

YOU CAN RECYCLE
- Paper, newspapers & magazines
- Flattened cardboard and paperboard (such as biscuit/ cereal boxes)
- Glass bottles & jars
- Empty plastic bags, bottles & containers
- Food tins, cans, foil, scrap metal & empty aerosol cans
- Foil-lined juice & milk cartons

Recyclable materials go into the clear bag.

YOU CAN'T RECYCLE
- Disposable nappies & sanitary items
- Hazardous household waste
- Wet or dirty items
- Adhesive & laminated paper
- Cigarette butts & ash
- Pet litter
- Garden waste & food scraps
- Clothing & shoes
- Paper towels, serviettes & tissues
- Anything that will dirty other clean recyclables in the bag
- Number 7 plastics (look for the identification code on the packaging's label)

Do NOT mix the above with your recyclable items.

REMEMBER!
Human hands are going to sort through your recyclables, so make sure it's clean and safe!

INTERESTED?
Be a waste hero, man! Your municipality will issue you with FREE recycling bag(s). When a bag is full, put it out on collection day.

MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO GET YOUR RECYCLING BAG(S)?
Contact your local municipality.

SUNNY'S TIPS
Be a recycling pro by:
- Scraping off food waste and rinsing out containers.
- Ensuring items are clean and dry before adding them to your recycling.
- Wrapping glass items or broken glass in newspaper before putting it in your clear bag.
- Flattening boxes and placing them underneath your recycling bag.

CLEAN STARTS **WITH ME**

CAPE WINELANDS DISTRICT

Cut out and put on fridge.

BINNE

2027 Absa Cape Epic: One Line. Everything Changes. P.2

Celebrating 22 Years of Winelands Echo! P.4

300 bicycles handed over to schools during 2026 WCG Cycle Tour P.8

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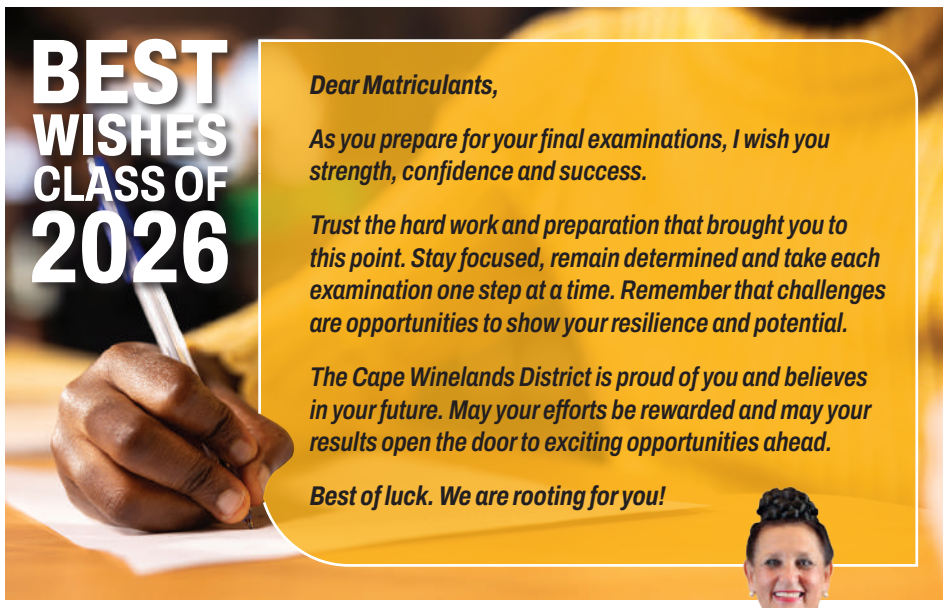

Western Cape honours teachers on World Teachers' Day

On 5 October is World Teachers' Day, where we take a moment to highlight the important role our teachers play in shaping the nation.

Throughout the month of October we are celebrating Teacher Appreciation Month, where we want to encourage communities to thank the teachers who make a difference in the lives of our children every day.We know that much of what teachers do happens beyond the classroom and long after the school bell has rung. They show up for our learners everyday, giving their time, energy, and commitment because they care.

October is Teacher Appreciation Month, a time for us to recognise and thank the teachers who make a difference every day.Their work leaves a lasting impact on learners and communities across the Western Cape. Just take Mthobi Fihla, Danielle Bosch, and Hortense Stegmann – three Western Cape teachers who recently walked away with the top prize at the National Teaching Awards (https://www.westerncape.gov.za/education/article/western-capes-top-teachers make-their-mark-national-teaching-awards).

Ms Stegmann'sguiding motto is "Nurture every learner's potential, empower growth, inspire blossoming brilliance."

Mr Fihla's perseverance, visionary leadership and unwavering commitment brought inclusive education closer to learners who needed it most. Ms Bosch believes every child has the potential to succeed when given the right support, encouragement and opportunities to shine, and she refuses to let obstacles get in the way of that.These individuals exemplify the power of teachers. They not only teach, but they lead, innovate, and change lives. And they do so quietly and consistently, despite immense daily challenges.

This month, we invite learners, parents, former learners and communities across the Western Cape to join us in celebrating our teachers and to take a moment to thank a teacher who has made a difference to you or your child.To every teacher: thank you for the care, dedication and sacrifices you make every day.

2027 Absa Cape Epic Route Revealed: One Line That Changes Everything

The 2027 Absa Cape Epic will draw a new line across the Western Cape. More than 700 kilometres of racing, iconic climbs, world-class trails and three host regions will combine to create a route that signals not only the next chapter of the race, but the beginning of a new era for the Untamed African Mountain Bike Race.

Unveiled at the 2027 Route Launch Gala Dinner held in Cape Town at Southern Sun Cape Sun, the route takes riders from Lourensford Wine Estate in Somerset West to the valleys of Ceres, through the mountains of Tulbagh and into the legendary trails of Wellington, where one final finish line awaits after eight days of racing. Along the way, riders will tackle the highest point ever reached in the history of the Absa Cape Epic on Waboomsberg, experience some of South Africa's most celebrated trail networks, and face the iconic Cliffhanger on the Queen Stage.

Built around the theme One Line That Changes Everything, the 2027 route reflects the reality of the Absa Cape Epic: every rider arrives with a different story, but all are transformed by the line they choose to cross.

The route opens with a 27km Prologue at Lourensford Wine Estate before moving into two demanding stages around Ceres, including the race's longest day and a historic ascent of Waboomsberg. Riders then transition to a new race village at Saronsberg in Tulbagh, where spectacular mountain scenery, hidden valleys and technical singletrack continue to shape the race narrative. The final chapter unfolds in Wellington, home to the Queen Stage and the legendary Cliffhanger, before a Grand Finale that delivers riders to the finish line at Imbuko Wines.

From the purpose-built trail networks of Eselfontein, to the hidden valleys of the Witzenberg, the expansive roads of the Swartland and the iconic trails of Wellington, the 2027 route combines some of the finest riding in South Africa with landscapes and experiences that have come to define the Absa Cape Epic. It is a route designed to challenge the world's best professional riders while delivering an unforgettable journey for amateurs chasing their own Epic dream.

Shannon Valstar, Race Director for the Absa Cape Epic, said the 2027 route represents far more than the next edition of the race."2027 marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter for the Absa Cape Epic. With Absa renewing its commitment to the race, we have an incredible opportunity to build on everythingthat has made this event iconic while shaping what comes next. This route reflects that ambition. It honours the heritage of the race, but it also signals a new era of growth, innovation and impact."

"The theme of One Line That Changes Everything captures exactly what makes the Absa Cape Epic so special. It only takes one decision to enter, one start line to cross and one finish line to completely change how you see yourself and what you believe is possible."

"On a personal level, Ceres holds a special place in my journey. The first race village I ever worked in was Ceres during my very first year on the event as part of the media and live broadcast crew. Returning there as part of the 2027 route feels incredibly full circle and is a reminder of how many life-changing stories are created through this race, not only for riders, but for everyone fortunate enough to be involved in it."

Hendrico Burger, Route Director for the Absa Cape Epic, paid tribute to the landowners, trail builders and communities who helped make the 2027 route possible."Every edition of the Absa Cape Epic is built on partnerships. We are incredibly grateful to the landowners, farmers, trail builders, local communities and stakeholders who open their properties, share their trails and work alongside us to bring this event to life."

"Following the floods earlier this year, that support has been more important than ever. Many people have gone above and beyond to restore trails, repair infrastructure and help us create a route that showcases the very best of the Western Cape."

The 2027 Absa Cape Epic will see riders cover more than 700 kilometres and approximately 17,000 metres of climbing across eight days of racing, culminating in Wellington at Imbuko Wines – owned by the Van Zijl and Zenzen families, where one final finish line awaits.

For every rider, however, the route is about far more than statistics. It is about partnership, perseverance and discovering what lies beyond the limits they once thought possible. It is about drawing a line between who they are today and who they become by the time they reach the finish.

More than 700 kilometres. Three iconic host regions. One unforgettable journey.
In 2027, the Absa Cape Epic enters a new era. And for every rider bold enough to take on the challenge, it begins with one decision, one start line and one line that changes everything.

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What's up in the Winelands

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Drakenstein Municipality's remarkable financial turnaround earns national recognition

Drakenstein Municipality was recognised for achieving the most significant improvement in financial sustainability among South Africa's municipalities at the prestigious annual Municipal Performance Awards, presented by the South African Property Owners Association (SAPOA) and Ratings Afrika, at Sun City on Thursday, 1 October 2026.

The winners are chosen based on data from Ratings Afrika's annual Municipal Financial Sustainability Index (MFSI), which benchmarks the fiscal health and service delivery of South Africa's municipalities. Having been ranked among the top five, Drakenstein Municipality is now – out of 39 secondary cities in South Africa – the highest-ranked secondary city in the country on the index.

At the award ceremony, Drakenstein Municipality received the award as the most improved municipality in the 2026 MFSI in recognition of its remarkable financial turnaround in just six years, which is reflected in its steady rise in the MFSI rankings:

•2017: Ranked 51st nationally.
•2019: Implemented a targeted financial turnaround plan.
•2021: Ranked 34th nationally.
•2025: Ranked 10th nationally.
•2026 (Latest MFSI Index): Broke into the national Top 5, making Drakenstein Municipality the most financially sustainable secondary city in South Africa.

Councillor Stephen Korabie, Executive Mayor of Drakenstein Municipality, says the recognition reflects years of deliberate effort and commitment across the organisation. "This recognition belongs to every resident, employee and stakeholder who has contributed to building a financially stable municipality. Sound finances enable us to deliver better services, expand infrastructure and create opportunities for economic growth," says the Executive Mayor.

Dr Johan Leibbrandt, City Manager of Drakenstein Municipality, says the turnaround strategy entailed strict fiscal discipline, cost containment, improved operational efficiency and focusing on core priorities. "We reviewed structures, optimised vacant posts, reduced unnecessary expenditure and found smarter ways of working. Importantly, we did this without external consultants," says Dr Leibbrandt. He attributes the financial turnaround to strong leadership and consistent daily performance management, which remain the cornerstones of the Municipality's operations.

"We monitor expenditure weekly. We embrace every opportunity to save money, whether by reducing fuel consumption, managing overtime more effectively, or improving operational efficiency."The City Manager notes that despite financial pressures, the Municipality continued to meet its service delivery commitments. "Throughout the turnaround period, we never defaulted on any of our financial obligations, including payments to Eskom."

While the award recognises financial excellence, Dr Leibbrandt says the ultimate goal is not a position on an index.

"Financial sustainability is not only measured by how much money you have in the bank, but by how you utilise those resources to deliver services and build infrastructure to benefit the community. Financial sustainability is not the destination; it is the foundation.

"While we have maintained funded budgets for five consecutive years, we have made substantial infrastructure investments. We are attracting investors and developers to stimulate our economy and ultimately create jobs," says Dr Leibbrandt.This latest recognition adds to a growing list of achievements for Drakenstein Municipality. The Municipality was named the Best Municipality in the Western Cape at the 2025 Western Cape Government Service Excellence Awards and received its 11th clean audit from the Auditor-General of South Africa for the 2024/25 financial year.

The research and advocacy non-profit organisation, Good Governance Africa (GGA), also ranks Drakenstein Municipality as South Africa's leading secondary city for good governance in its latest Governance Performance Index.

Welcome to the Cape Winelands where vineyards covers the lands and Winelands Echo cover the rest!

Deadline for news: Tuesday 14:00 (week of print)

Deadline for advertising: Wednesday 12:00 (week of print)

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Winelands Echo

YOU ARE WHAT YOU READ

Message from the Publisher:

Winelands Echo Marks 22 Years of Community Journalism Amid Advertising Inequality

PAARL, Western Cape, Winelands Echo proudly marks its 22nd anniversary this October. Founded on October 15, 2004, the publication has spent over two decades serving as a vital voice for historically marginalized communities across the Cape Winelands. Over the years, Winelands Echo has successfully evolved into a multi-platform media organization, seamlessly integrating our traditional print newspaper with a dynamic digital footprint that includes our official website, WhatsApp community updates, and active social media channels.

A Call for Equity in Municipal AdvertisingWhile we celebrate this major milestone, we must address a deeply concerning reality. Today, Winelands Echo is profoundly disillusioned by the ongoing lack of advertising support from our local municipalities.Despite official commitments to transformation and local economic development, municipal advertising budgets continue to be disproportionately allocated to legacy businesses and media entities that historically benefited from Apartheid-era structures. Local, community-owned independent media outlets that genuinely reflect and serve our diverse grassroots communities continue to be sidelined by public sector spend aswell as Corporate South Africa, what a shame!

Gratitude to Our Readers and Loyal Partners.As we reflect on our 22-year journey, our deepest gratitude goes out to the people of the Cape Winelands.

Our Communities: Thank you for your unwavering trust, loyalty, and partnership in making us your trusted source of local news.

Our Advertisers:
Thank you to the loyal commercial partners who recognize the value of community-driven journalism and continue to support our mission.
We remain steadfast in our commitment to telling your stories, holding power to account, and bridging the information gap in the Cape Winelands for many years to come.

Media Contact & Inquiries:
Joseph Bushby
Winelands Echo
Email: ads.wlecho@gmail.com
Phone: 066 521 6455

CELEBRATING 22 YEARS

TWO DECADES OF LOCAL NEWS & STORIES | 2004 - 2026

LOCAL MILESTONES

2004-2007

Founding & Public Partnerships (2004–2007):

Launched in 2004, the publication quickly became a primary information channel for municipal, provincial, and national government bodies across the Western Cape. Drakenstein and Cape Winelands District municipalities remain steadfast print partners to this day.

2005-2013

Retail & Corporate Era (2005–2013):

Weekly advertising campaigns and inserts from major national chains like Shoprite and Pick n Pay highlighted the publication's strong local distribution reach.

2014

Adapting to Market Shifts (2014 Onwards):

As corporate print ad spending shifted away from independent papers, Winelands Echo persevered by doubling down on hyper-local community journalism, loyal municipal partnerships, and independent local businesses.

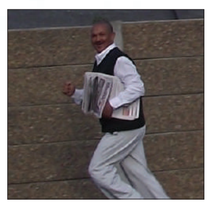
2026

Digital Transformation (Present):

To meet evolving reader habits and ensure long-term sustainability, the publication has successfully expanded into a multimedia platform, combining traditional print with a robust digital and social media presence.

THEN & NOW

FIRST EDITION LATEST EDITION



VOICES OF THE WINELANDS

SRT Distribution Shaun :
"Happy 22nd Anniversary!On behalf of my team and myself, I want to express our sincere gratitude for the opportunity to distribute Winelands Echo throughout the Winelands and Boland region. Thank you for your continued dedication to empowering and supporting the people in our communities.

We value our partnership deeply and look forward to building an even stronger relationship as we continue to deliver the Winelands Echo to our readers"

Next Level Communications:
"The Winelands Echo team have demonstrated that sustainable business relationships are built on mutual value, shared objectives and a commitment to delivering results.

As Winelands Echo celebrates 22 years of community service, we commend your contribution to local communication and community development. We believe that supporting established local media is an investment in the future of our communities, our businesses and our shared prosperity."

Shaun Cloete

Kate Skinner

Karel Dampies

Bradley Fortain

"VOICES OF THE COMMUNITY OVER THE YEARS"

Kate Skinner:
"Well done to Winelands Echo for 22 years of publishing! What a feat! The community media environment is such a difficult environment to operate in. It takes guts and tenacity to keep going day after day! So again warmest well done and all the best for the next 22 years!"

Angels of Hope (NGO) Karel Dampies:
"A 22nd anniversary to Angels of Hope! Wow, this is a major milestone, 22 years. You have made our community aware of events in our town, of opportunities, and much more.
You have given our organization a great deal of exposure. We want to say a big thank you to you for opening the path for us. A big thank you that we can send our articles to you, our news events, and also join hands with you. Angels of Hope, another 22 years and many more, an anniversary from Angels of Hope and Karel Dampies, community worker here in Wellington."

Bradley Fortain:
"I would like to commend the management, editorial team, journalists, contributors, advertisers and everyone who has played a role in building and sustaining the Winelands Echo over the years. Their collective efforts have helped preserve a platform through which local news and community stories can be shared.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

For 22 incredible years, Winelands Echo has had the honor of serving as your trusted voice in our community. We are deeply grateful to our readers, advertisers, and partners whose unwavering support and loyalty have made this journey possible.

Evolving from a traditional print newspaper into a dynamic multimedia publication across both print and digital platforms has been a privilege, allowing us to keep you connected wherever you are.

As we look ahead, we are excited to expand our video coverage, launch podcasts, and deliver richer digital storytelling, ensuring that local news remains accessible, vibrant, and relevant for generations to come. Thank you for walking this path with us!

Lindinkosi Ndibongo:

''I had a privilege of working with the Winelands Echo when I joined the Media Development and Diversity Agency as Programme Manager Small Commercial Media in 2008. It was one of the the projects that I found stuck in huge funding backlog at that time. When I conducted a desktop assessment on the files that were in the backlog, it struck me as one of the projects that were directly addressing the mandate of the MDDA as clearly stipulated in the Preamble of the MDDA Act.

We then immediately conducted an on-site assessment which indeed confirmed our findings. Ever since then, this small commercial newspaper based in the small wine farming town of Paarl proved itself to be a force to be reckoned with, as a voice of the previously disadvantaged and marginalised communities in the Western Cape. It is one of the benchmarks that has proven that indeed social entrepreneurs such as its Chief Publisher Joseph Bushby can stand out and be counted amongst those who have managed to sustain their businesses beyond harsh socio economic conditions faced by victims of apartheid in South Africa. It was a great learning curve for me working and learning from you from 2008 until 2021.Indeed, as we celebrate this milestone; I wish Joe, his partner and soulmate Dawn, and the whole Winelands Echo team, all the success as they navigate the deep stormy waters, and as they swim against the tide of

the mainstream media and the cruel conglomerates that monopolises the media space and the entire advertising landscape in our great country." warm and heartfelt regards, Lindinkosi Ndibongo former Project Manager: Print and Digital Media at Media Development and Diversity Agent

Mbali Dhlomo:*Congratulations to Winelands Echo*

Allow me to express my heartfelt congratulations to Winelands Echo for reaching this exceptional milestone. Being over 2 decades in the community print media sector is no easy feat. It is an achievement that definitely needs to be celebrated, more especially for a publication such as Winelands Echo which has stood the test of time.

My special congratulations also go to the founders of the publication.
I have no doubt that your setting up of the publication has, over the years, greatly-amplified the voices of the Cape Winelands community. May Winelands Echo grow from strength to strength and empower future generations with ideas and powerful information. May the newspaper continue to shine the light on the good, while exposing the injustices of our time.Well done to Joseph and Dawn Bushby. You are an exceptional example to many of us who look up to you. Your resilience and fighting spirit have emboldened us. Continue fighting for the well-being of our sector and community print publishers. Continue speaking out against unfair and uncompetitive behaviour in the entire media sector, and against racism and corruption.

Above all, keep going. Fight with all your might to keep the doors of your publishing business open. If you do that, you will not only succeed for yourself, but for all of us in the sector. Congratulations and well done on 22 years of flying the print media sector flag high.
Wishing Winelands Echo many fruitful years ahead.

Farm workers march in Cape Town for public land to be released for housing

By Liezl Human

Over 100 farm workers marched to Parliament in Cape Town on Thursday, calling on Public Works Minister Dean Macpherson to release public land for housing and redistribution to workers. Photos: Ashraf Hendricks

About 150 farm workers marched to Parliament in Cape Town on Thursday, calling on Public Works Minister Dean Macpherson to release public land for housing and for redistribution to farm workers.

They chanted "resistance everywhere, all the time" and carried placards reading, "We want land for housing" and "We want justice" as they walked through Hanover Street.

The march followed the three-day National Farm Worker Platform, hosted by the Women on Farms Project (WFP). About 15 farm worker organisations from across South Africa participated, including the Casual Workers Advice Office, the Rural Women's Assembly, and unions representing farm workers such as the Commercial Stevedoring Agricultural and Allied Workers Union (CSAAWU) and Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU).

The platform gave farm workers an opportunity to raise concerns and engage with officials from government departments. Representatives from the departments of employment and labour as well as land reform and rural development also attended.

The event ended with Thursday's march, where the organisations called for an urgent meeting with Macpherson and for public land to be redistributed to "farm workers and farm dwellers who have often lived and worked on the land for generations". Farm workers want public land released for women small-scale farmers and to be used to house farm workers.

In their memorandum, the groups said: "Limited access to land remains a major contributing factor to the inhumane conditions experienced by many families living and working in farming communities".

Carmen Louw, WFP co-director, said the organisation had seen an increase in evictions in the Stellenbosch area. She said WFP want people who work and live on farm to have access to housing and land to grow food for their families.

Engela van Schalkwyk, who lives on a farm in De Doorns, said her mother lived and worked on a farm for nearly 60 years. When she retired, she had to leave the farm and the home she had lived in her whole life.

"The farmers are getting richer … but our farm workers own nothing. We want decent houses," she said.

Van Schalkwyk said secure land tenure would make a "huge difference" in her mother's life. Land tenure gives people legally recognised rights to live on and use the land they occupy, without the risk of being evicted.

Farm workers want public land released for women small-scale farmers and to be used to house farm workers.

20 Years of Excellence: 2026 FNB Sauvignon Blanc SA Top 10 Revealed

South African Sauvignon Blanc has evolved considerably over the past two decades, earning recognition for its quality, stylistic diversity and premium appeal. The 20th FNB Sauvignon Blanc SA Top 10 competition celebrates this progress and pays tribute to a challenging 2025 vintage that delivered exceptional results. The ten winning wines – nine from the 2025 vintage and one from 2026 – demonstrate the cultivar's versatility and the distinctive character of its growing regions.

Sauvignon Blanc South Africa announced the ten winners on Wednesday, 14 October, at Weltevreden Wine Estate in Stellenbosch. The garden celebration brought together wine, art and music, with masters of ceremonies Ryan O'Connor and Success Lekabe treating guests to a sculpture hunt that culminated in the reveal of the Top 10 from the 20 finalists.

The 2026 competition attracted 159 entries from 95 producers, spanning four vintages. It remains South Africa's only competition dedicated exclusively to Sauvignon Blanc. Six wooded and four unwooded wines feature in this year's winning selection, reflecting the breadth of styles being explored by winemakers. Regionally, Cape Town and Elgin are particularly well represented.

The 2026 FNB Sauvignon Blanc SA Top 10, in alphabetical order, are:

Carmen Stevens Sauvignon Blanc 2025 (wooded) – Cape Town, Coastal Region
De Grendel Koetshuis Sauvignon Blanc 2025 (wooded) – Cape West Coast, Coastal Region
Groot Phesantekraal Marizanne 2025 (wooded) – Cape Town, Coastal Region
Iona Elgin Highlands Sauvignon Blanc 2026 (unwooded) – Elgin, Cape South Coast
La Motte Pierneef Sauvignon Blanc 2025 (wooded) – Cape South Coast
Lomond Seven Rows Ben Nevis Sauvignon Blanc 2025 (wooded) – Cape Agulhas, Cape South Coast
Quoin Rock Nicobar Sauvignon Blanc 2025 (wooded) – Western Cape
Steenberg Black Swan 2025 (unwooded) – Constantia, Coastal Region
Tokara Reserve Collection Sauvignon Blanc 2025 (unwooded) – Elgin, Cape South Coast
Wildeberg Terroirs Sauvignon Blanc 2025 (unwooded) – Stellenbosch, Coastal Region

"The presence of wooded expressions alongside fresher, unwooded wines shows that South African producers are not tied to a single formula," says oenologist Dr Carien Coetzee, who convened the 2026 judging panel. "Winemakers are exploring texture and complexity while retaining the vibrancy that makes Sauvignon Blanc so appealing. Across all styles, these wines share precision, clear varietal character and a strong sense of place. Together, they confirm what many of us suspected: that 2025 was an exceptional year for Sauvignon Blanc in South Africa."

Dr Coetzee led an expert panel comprising Dr Winifred Bowman, Cape Wine Master and international judge; Anton Swarts, Cape Wine Master, procurement manager and senior winemaker at Spier Wine Estate; Morgan Steyn, winemaker at De Grendel Wine Estate and Sauvignon Blanc SA committee member; Johann Fourie, cellarmaster at Benguela Cove Lagoon Wine Estate; and Cape Winemakers Guild protégés Reneilwe Senosha and Marché Hendricks as guest judges.

20 YEARS OF GROWING THE CATEGORY

"This 20th edition of the FNB Sauvignon Blanc SA Top 10 is an opportunity to recognise how far South African Sauvignon Blanc has progressed," says Elunda Basson, Chairperson of Sauvignon Blanc SA. "Over two decades, the competition has helped producers showcase their wines, explore new possibilities and build recognition for the quality and diversity of our cultivar. As producers continue to refine their craft and push stylistic boundaries, we are broadening perceptions of what South African Sauvignon Blanc can be.

"This milestone belongs to the producers who continue to raise the bar and to our partners, whose support enables us to invest in the reputation and future of South African Sauvignon Blanc. We extend our sincere thanks to our title partner, FNB, our platinum partner, EVER Solutions, and all our other partners. We look forward to the next twenty years of discovery, diversity and distinction."

Stephan Claassen, FNB Commercial's Provincial Head for the Western and Eastern Cape, congratulated the winners and highlighted the value of long-term collaboration between business and agriculture.

"Over the past 20 years, our partnership with Sauvignon Blanc SA has reflected a shared commitment to innovation, excellence and long-term sustainability in one of South Africa's most dynamic and globally recognised industries. The wine sector continues to evolve, creating opportunities for growth while adapting to changing consumer expectations and embracing new possibilities.

"The exceptional quality of our Sauvignon Blanc strengthens South Africa's position in international markets and attracts visitors to our winelands. Through initiatives like the Top 10, we are proud to support an industry that contributes to rural development, job creation and economic growth across the value chain. As the category continues to grow and premiumise, FNB remains committed to supporting its innovation and success."

TASTE, BUY AND LEARN MORE

Look out for the Top 10 winners displaying the distinctive, cultivar leaf-shaped logo on their labels.

The 2026 FNB Sauvignon Blanc SA Top 10 collection is available online at https://www.getwine.co.za/ and at Wine Stellenbosch TOPS and Kwikspar Somerset West @Lion's Square. A booklet featuring tasting notes on the winning wines and the Sauvignon Blanc aroma wheel is free to download at https://sauvignonblanc.com/.

FROM HEARTBREAK TO HEALING: How Paarl's Lucinde Small turned her private journal into a beacon of hope

By Carlo Small

Over time, however, she realised that the pain, doubts, and emotional struggles recorded on those pages were not hers alone — they were universal.

Turning those private entries into Dear Jez-Ebel was an uphill battle. As an independent author, she had to learn the ins and outs of the publishing industry from scratch, managing everything on her own. More than the logistical hurdles, her biggest obstacle was overcoming fear and vulnerability.

"Vulnerability is a frightening thing," she reflects. "Publishing meant trusting that readers would see more than my pain; they would see hope. The belief that if my story helped even one person feel less alone made it worth sharing."

For Lucinde, holding the physical paperback in her hands was a major milestone, but the true reward comes when everyday readers reach out to say her words helped them heal.

Dear Jez-Ebel Book Launch 16 May 2025. Source: Dear Jez-Ebel Facebook Page

What Dear Jez-Ebel Teaches Us
Dear Jez-Ebel is rooted in honest self-reflection, self-love, and forgiveness. It tackles uncomfortable conversations that many people in our communities carry in silence — letting go of past hurts, finding purpose after a setback, and trusting that quiet "gut feeling" we so often ignore as adults.

When asked what success looks like, Lucinde does not point to book sales or awards. Instead, she measures it by real human impact.

"Success is knowing that years from now, someone might pick up one of my books and find exactly the hope they needed," she says. "Doing what is right even when no one is watching, that is integrity."

Looking Ahead: A New Chapter in Fiction
Having established her voice through non-fiction, Lucinde is currently working on a fiction novel. While Dear Jez-Ebel walked readers through personal healing, her new project invites readers into a story where the ordinary and extraordinary meet.

It serves as a gentle reminder that even when life feels tough, we still hold the power to imagine, create, and build a better future beyond our immediate circumstances.

For Lucinde, stories are tools to bring people together, rebuild self-worth, and remind us all to stay curious.
"I hope people remember me as someone who helped them believe that their story wasn't over," she concludes. "If my books remind readers to be courageous, stay curious, and hold onto hope, then I'll feel I've done what I was meant to do."

Dear Jez-Ebel is available in paperback. Keep an eye out for Lucinde's upcoming fiction release as she continues to share stories of hope and new beginnings

Life has a way of throwing heavy burdens at working-class families. Whether it is struggling to pay the bills, raising children as a single parent, or fighting through seasons of deep emotional pain, many of us know what it feels like to reach what seems like the end of the road.

But for Paarl-born author and single mother Lucinde Small, those dark moments were not the end of her story — they were simply the start of a brand-new chapter.

Today, Lucinde is inspiring ordinary South Africans through her self-published memoir, Dear Jez-Ebel, and is already hard at work on her next project. Her message to the working class, the unemployed, and anyone carrying hidden wounds is simple yet powerful: your hardest chapter does not define the rest of your life.

Rooted in the Winelands, Built on Resilience
Growing up in Paarl, surrounded by the picturesque mountains of the Cape Winelands, life was not always easy for Lucinde. Yet, the hardships of her youth instilled in her the core values that define her character today: resilience, compassion, and plain daily gratitude.

"Those experiences shaped who I am and reminded me that our circumstances don't define us, our response to them does," says Lucinde.

Outside of her writing, Lucinde lives a relatable life. She is a single mother of two whose children remain the biggest influence on her journey, pushing her to be stronger and more intentional every day. She enjoys long drives, quiet moments at home, a walk in nature, and hiding a secret packet of Zoo Cookies where her kids cannot find them. Above all, she believes in the simple comfort of everyday life — noting with a smile that "some of life's biggest problems seem a little smaller after a really good cup of coffee."

Finding the Courage to Share
Lucinde never set out with grand ambitions to become a published author. Her journey began quietly, holding a pen over a blank journal during one of the most painful periods of her life. Journaling became a safe space to process her emotions and make sense of her surroundings.

Dear Jez-Ebel Book Launch 16 May 2025.

GOOD LUCK CLASS OF 2026!

The 2026 National Senior Certificate examinations are upon us, and we want to wish the Class of 2026 good luck!

Learners are starting on 13 October with Computer Applications Technology Practical and will conclude on 25 November 2026.

71 302 full-time and 13 834 part-time and repeat NSC candidates will be sitting for the exams in the Western Cape.The 2025 class achieved a pass rate of 88.2% for the NSC exams, a marked improvement from 2024's 86.6%. This year, we are hopeful of improving on last year's result.

Our province also had the highest retention rate last year, and we are continuing to concentrate on the quality of our passes, especially considering National Minister Siviwe Gwarube's announcement of a move towards new quality indicators.Thank you to all our principals, Grade 12 teachers, tutors and officials across the province who have been working hard to make sure our matriculants are prepared for their exams.

Thank you to the parents and guardians who have been supporting the matriculants in their household. This is a stressful time for your children, so they need all your love, care, and support right now. If you know of any learners who are struggling, reach out to the WCED for help. Schools can call the Safe Schools Hotline [0800 45 46 47 toll free] that can connect learners with help from our sister departments and NGOs.

I want to ask communities to also work with us to ensure a calm and peaceful environment for our matriculants. They have worked hard to get to this moment and deserve all our support!

Remember there are various academic support resources available on the WCED website (https://www.westerncape.gov.za/education/matric-support). Here you will find Grade 12 exam question papers and memoranda, video tutorials, study guides and subject-specific academic support, study tips, information on funding for further studies, health and wellbeing support resources, and free internet and related services through WCG eCentres.

To the matriculants: It is now the final stretch. For the next couple of weeks, please remain focused. Do not be tempted to take a shortcut, it is simply not worth it. You have all signed a pledge to adhere to the exam rules, so please abide by these.

Hard work, discipline, and constructive breaks in between studying are needed right now. Celebrations will come later.Make yourselves, your families and your communities proud!

Winelands Echo

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winelandsecho@exclusivemail.co.za ads.wlecho@gmail.com

15 October 2026 VOL 17 EDITION 490 Tel: 066 521 6455

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300 bicycles handed over to schools during 2026 Western Cape Government Cycle Tour

We are now just one week away from the 2026 matric examinations!

71 302 full-time National Senior Certificate (NSC) candidates will be sitting for the exams in the Western Cape, which are scheduled to start on 13 October with Computer Applications Technology Practical, and conclude on 25 November 2026. There are also 13 834 part-time and repeat NSC candidates.

There are 28 examination days over a period of 7 weeks. No exams will be written on 2 to 5 November due to Local Government Elections, and on 9 November due to Diwali.We appeal to matriculants to use their time wisely and not let anything disrupt their studying.

For those who wish to vote, I encourage you to consider applying for a special vote as this could prevent you from potentially spending hours in long queues, wasting precious learning time. The IEC has a process whereby you can apply to cast a special vote on 2 or 3 November at your voting station. You can do so by going onto the IEC's website https://registertovote.elections.org.za/voter/specialvotes/application/submit or by sending your ID number via SMS to 32249. SMSes cost R1. Applications for special votes close on 12 October at 5pm.

Thank you to all our Grade 12 teachers, tutors and officials across the province who have been working with our matriculants during the Spring break to make sure they are prepared for their exams.

A range of support resources have been made available on the WCED website (https://www.westerncape.gov.za/education/matric-support), such as Grade 12 exam question papers and memoranda, video tutorials, study guides and subject-specific academic support, study tips, information on funding for further studies, health and wellbeing support resources, and free internet and related services through WCG eCentres.

We also encourage any learners who are struggling, or adults who are concerned about a learner's mental health to reach out to the WCED for help. Schools can reach out to the Safe Schools Hotline [0800 45 46 47 toll free] that can connect learners with help from our sister departments and NGOs.Let us all work together to support our learners any way we can. Thank you to the communities that are working with schools to ensure our matriculants can study and write their exams in a calm manner.

To the matriculants: your hard work and sacrifices will pay off.

We hope you remain focused and disciplined and take constructive breaks in between studying. Do not let anything deter you from the path you have been diligently walking on for 12 years.

The Western Cape is behind you every step of the way!

Carrol Boyes partners with CANSA for limited-edition Pink Legacy Pen

Every October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month brings renewed attention to the impact of breast cancer and the importance of awareness, prevention and early detection. It is a cause Carrol Boyes has long supported, and this year, the design house is putting pen to purpose.

In partnership with CANSA's Purchase with Purpose campaign, Carrol Boyes is introducing a limited-edition Pink Legacy Pen for Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Created as a special edition of the Carrol Boyes Legacy Collection, in ballpoint, rollerball and fountain pen formats, they are distinguished by a pink body and signature sculptural 'Woman' motif. The female figure emerges gracefully to form the clip, rendered in gold finishes. As she has throughout Carrol Boyes' work, the woman becomes more than an artistic motif, she represents resilience, elegance and enduring femininity. It is a fitting expression for a pen created to carry a message that deserves to be written, shared and remembered.

The collaboration will extend beyond the limited-edition pen. On 21 October, CANSA will host its annual High Tea, honouring life, survivorship and caregiving. Carrol Boyes is proud to partner with and sponsor the event.

The occasion continues a cause that was deeply meaningful to Carrol Boyes herself. As an advocate for breast cancer awareness, Carrol encouraged people to recognise the role each of us can play in educating and supporting those around us: "Woman to woman, sister to sister, mother to daughter, families, friends and colleagues help educate and raise awareness."

Carrol's commitment to the cause also lives on through her artwork. Her sketch, aptly titled 'Strength', celebrates resilience through the expressive female form. Depicting a graceful figure enveloped in pink, the artwork captures an unmistakable sense of feminine confidence and inner strength.

Today, the Strength Collection carries that symbolism forward. Serving as both a meaningful gift and a reminder of the resilience represented by the women at the heart of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Carrol Boyes honours a message Carrol herself championed: awareness begins when we choose to speak, share and support one another.

About Carrol Boyes

Carrol Boyes is a South African design house celebrated for its distinctive fusion of art and function. Inspired by the human form and crafted with meticulous attention to detail, each piece reflects a commitment to innovation, quality, and timeless elegance.

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