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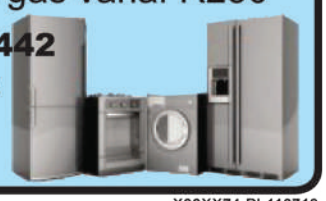
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Technical schools programme geared towards creating workplace-ready learners

Premier Alan Winde and Western Cape Minister of Education Jaco Londt have officially launched a major new initiative to strengthen technical education in the Western Cape.

The Western Cape Education Department's Technical Schools Revitalisation Programme was showcased at Bellville Technical High School on Thursday, 22 October 2026.

WCED has allocated a total of R127 million to the programme.

The initiative, implemented in collaboration with Certify Academy, a division of the CAD4ALL Institute of Architecture and Digital Arts, aims to equip learners with industry-relevant technical skills and provide them with opportunities to leave school with more than just a National Senior Certificate.

Certify Academy's Jody van Heerden said, "Through our innovative multi-certification model, learners in Grades 10 to 12 can obtain multiple industry-relevant and internationally recognised skills certifications, supported by practical experience and a digital portfolio of evidence showcasing their competencies and achievements."

The programme is currently being rolled out to six schools: Proteus Secondary, Joe Slovo Technical High School, Bellville Technical High School, Eden Technical High School, Oude Molen Technical High School and Drostdy Technical High School.

A total of 2 390 Grade 10 learners, 2 499 Grade 11 learners, 1 810 matriculants and 137 teachers are currently participating in the programme.

The programme will:

Expand opportunities for learners through industry exposure, workplace-based learning opportunities, internationally recognised certifications and practical skills development.

Upgrade workshops, equipment and technology to ensure learners train in environments that reflect modern industry standards.

Strengthen teaching capacity through specialist training, professional development opportunities and additional support personnel.

Foster stronger partnerships with industry, TVET colleges and tertiary institutions to create seamless pathways to employment, entrepreneurship and further study.

Provincial Minister Londt said, "We are highlighting the importance of technical education as it brings together academic learning with practical, industry-aligned skills training, giving learners a direct pathway from the classroom to employment, entrepreneurship or further technical studies. This is a significant investment in the future of this province and the country. When our learners succeed, businesses gain access to better skills, communities become more resilient, and the economy grows. Everyone benefits. Thank you to our officials and partners like Certify Academy for your hard work in getting this programme off the ground."

Premier Winde said, "This programme will also help us address the challenge of youth unemployment. We will keep investing in equipping more young people with the skills they need to thrive in our economy. Skills development is a vital part of our Growth for Jobs strategy and through the Technical Schools Revitalisation Programme we are also better preparing our youth with skills that are more relevant for the future."The programme is scheduled to run over a three-year period, with the first cohort of learners expected to matriculate in 2028.



Premier Winde and Minister Londt with WCED management and officials, and principals from the participating schools (in the front row).

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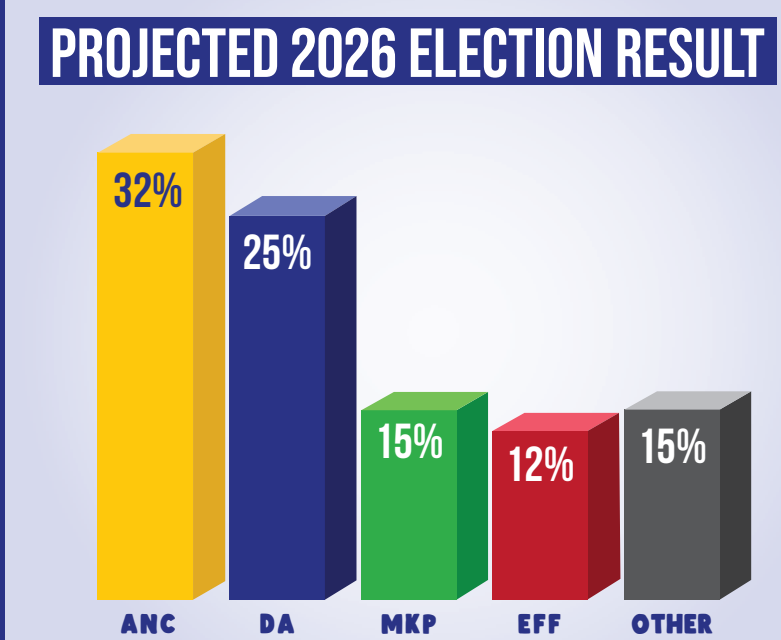
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R88.6 million flood-repair programme advances at Klawer and Vredendal



Repairs to flood-damaged sections of the MR547 between Klawer and Vredendal have been completed, while work continues on two bridges and associated roads under an R88.6 million Western Cape Government Department of Infrastructure contract.

The programme addresses damage caused by the severe floods of May 2026, restoring infrastructure that connects communities and supports the movement of people and goods.

On the TR16/01 between Vredendal and Vanrhynsdorp, approximately 50% of the roadworks and reinstatement of damaged services have been completed. The programme also includes restoring the supporting embankments at Bridge B2491A. Repairs to the bridge itself are scheduled for early 2027, with traffic accommodation measures in place.

At Bridge B3200A near Klawer on the MR547, reinstatement of the eastern bridge support is 60% complete, while work on the western support is 10% complete. Roadworks and erosion protection on the eastern side will follow.

Although repairs to the identified flood-damaged sections of the MR547 are complete, an additional section is being investigated to assess its condition and determine whether further work is required.

Western Cape Minister of Infrastructure, Tertuis Simmers, said:

“Flood damage disrupts daily life and places pressure on communities and businesses that depend on these routes. This R88.6 million investment is helping us restore damaged roads and bridges and protect the connections our communities rely on.

“The completed road repairs and progress at both bridges are important steps in that recovery. I thank residents and motorists for their patience while this work continues, and our construction teams for their efforts.”

Motorists are urged to follow temporary road signs and instructions from traffic personnel around construction areas.

Join the Cape Care Fund: United for Our Communities

CAPE TOWN — The Western Cape Department of Social Development (DSD) is calling on local businesses, non-profit organisations (NPOs), corporate partners, and citizens to join forces through the newly highlighted Cape Care Fund, aiming to bolster support and uplift vulnerable communities across the province.

The push for collective action follows a recent stakeholder engagement event hosted by Dorette Potgieter Productions. Leaders from civil society and the private sector gathered to map out actionable pathways for cross-sector collaboration, reinforcing a central message: tackling the Western Cape’s social challenges requires a unified, whole-of-society approach.

“Government cannot address the complex social challenges facing our communities alone,” said Minister Kaizer-Philander. “We need businesses, civil society, and skilled individuals to come alongside us and contribute in whatever way they can. The Cape Care Fund provides a direct bridge to turn goodwill into meaningful, sustainable support for vulnerable residents. We urge everyone with the heart, skills, and resources to join us.”

Bridging Resources for Maximum Impact NPOs play an indispensable role in delivering essential services to vulnerable citizens, often while navigating severe resource constraints. By connecting NPOs directly with businesses, corporate social investment (CSI) funds, and skilled professionals, the Cape Care Fund helps scale community-led solutions, strengthen operational capacity, and extend the reach of support across the Western Cape.

The tangible impact of such partnerships was underscored earlier this month with the launch of an inclusive playground at a disability day care centre in Mfuleni. Made possible through the support of an international donor and PPC Cement, the facility ensures that children with disabilities can enjoy play alongside their peers.

A teacher at the centre shared the profound change the installation has brought:

“From the moment the children began using the playground, we saw smiles, laughter, and pure joy. One of the most touching moments was seeing a child who normally spends his day in a buggy, unable to move independently, fully engaged and enjoying the experience. The playground has also helped children grow in confidence and independence, while encouraging social interaction, sharing, and playing together.”

Minister Kaizer-Philander extended sincere appreciation to Dorette Potgieter Productions for bringing together key stakeholders from diverse sectors to share ideas, build strategic networks, and ignite the initiative.How to Get Involved Stakeholders interested in participating can contribute in several ways:Businesses and CorporatePartners:CollaboratethroughCorporate Social Investment (CSI) initiatives, funding, sponsorship, or strategic resource allocation.

Skilled Professionals and Individuals: Offer pro-bono expertise, mentorship, or volunteer support. NPOs and Community Organisations: Register, share networks, and co-create targeted community interventions.Interested stakeholders are encouraged to contact the Western Cape Department of Social Development directly to discuss partnership opportunities.

Every breast cancer patient’s journey matter

A breast cancer diagnosis can bring fear, uncertainty and difficult decisions. For some women, the journey also brings unexpected sources of strength: a healthcare professional who listens, a volunteer who understands, or family and friends who offer support when it is needed most.

For 75-year-old Lorraine Mentoor from Cravenby, the journey began more than 20 years ago with a lump in her breast and a fear of what it might mean.“I was scared. I didn’t want to hear the word cancer. In my mind, if you hear cancer, it means death.”

In 2005, Lorraine was referred from her local day hospital to Tygerberg Hospital. Following a mammogram, sonar and biopsy, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and told she would need a mastectomy. She underwent the operation in January 2006.While she was in hospital, a representative from Reach for Recovery encouraged her to attend the organisation’s support meetings. There, she found support from people who understood the challenges she was facing.

“I attended the meetings and I have no regrets. I was received with open arms by Dr Sharon Čačala, and Dr Karin Baatjes. They were so friendly and did a wonderful job with my operation.”Twenty years later, Lorraine is cancer free. She now volunteers with Reach for Recovery, supporting women who are facing the same fear and uncertainty she once experienced. For 34-year-old Albertina Ida Ncube, the signs were different. She noticed unusual bruising, recurring hives and a lump in her breast. When her symptoms worsened, she sought medical attention and was diagnosed with breast cancer in October 2024.

The diagnosis came as a shock. Albertina went on to undergo eight rounds of chemotherapy, 15 sessions of radiation therapy and a double mastectomy. Complications during her recovery added to the challenges she faced.

At Groote Schuur Hospital’s Breast Clinic, the care she received from nurses and doctors helped her through some of the most vulnerable moments of her life.“The sisters always seemed to know when I was having a difficult day. Their gentle tone, kindness and reassurance made me feel safe and cared for. Even when I didn’t have the strength to say how I was feeling, they picked it up and comforted me. They reminded me that I wasn’t facing this journey alone.”

Her family, friends and colleagues also helped her remain positive and focused on recovery.

Although Lorraine and Albertina’s experiences differ, their stories show that breast cancer care involves more than medical procedures. Patients also need to feel supported as they navigate the emotional and practical challenges of treatment and recovery.

Working together to support patients

At Tygerberg and Groote Schuur Hospitals, specialised breast cancer teams work alongside referral hospitals and non-profit organisations to help patients access treatment and support throughout their journeys.

For Lorraine, the connection with Reach for Recovery became a lasting source of support. The organisation has a presence at both hospitals, where volunteers, many of whom are breast cancer survivors, provide encouragement, a listening ear and practical assistance. They also help women following breast surgery with prostheses.

Other partnerships address challenges that can affect patients’ confidence and access to care. The Look Good Feel Better programme visits both hospitals monthly, showing patients how to apply make-up and use wigs and hair accessories to manage changes in their appearance during their cancer treatment.

For patients facing financial and transport difficulties, the non-profit organisation Pink Ladies Cancer Transport Fund reimburses eligible travel expenses for cancer-related care at Tygerberg and Groote Schuur. The fund has supported patients travelling to and from the hospitals since 2025.

Project Flamingo helps improve access to breast cancer services at Tygerberg Hospital by supporting six additional Saturday theatre lists each year, enabling approximately 50 patients annually to receive surgery. It also supports monthly CT scanning lists for staging and treatment planning, as well as a visiting psychologist who sees patients weekly. Project Flamingo also supports numerous other public hospitals across the Western Cape with additional theatre lists for cancer-related surgeries.

Together, these partnerships complement the specialised services provided by Tygerberg and Groote Schuur Hospitals, serving patients referred from across the Western Cape and beyond.

Associate Professor Francois Malherbe, Head of the Breast, Surgical Endocrine and Sarcoma Unit at Groote Schuur Hospital and the University of Cape Town, says treatment must reflect each patient’s individual circumstances.

“Breast cancer is not one disease, and no two patients come to us with the same circumstances. Our role is to ensure each patient is assessed properly and that treatment is planned around both her cancer’s biology and her individual needs.”

He encourages women to seek medical attention promptly when they notice changes in their breasts.“A new lump or any other concerning change should be assessed at their local clinic or GP as soon as possible. Earlier diagnosis gives us more treatment options and, for many patients, a better chance of successful treatment.”

Dr Sharon Čačala, Head of Breast and Endocrine Surgery in the Division of Surgery at Tygerberg Hospital, emphasises that compassionate care and collaboration are essential throughout treatment.

“At Tygerberg Hospital, every breast cancer patient deserves the best possible treatment, along with compassion and dignity. Working with a multidisciplinary team that includes our referral hospitals, we strive to give personalised care, often in the face of significant challenges, for every breast cancer patient throughout their journey. Breast cancer can be a frightening diagnosis, but with earlier diagnosis and advances in treatment, it is not the end of the story. We need to face these challenges together, with courage, commitment, and hope.”

For Albertina, the message to other women is clear: “If something doesn’t feel right, get it checked. Early detection can save lives.”

Western Cape Minister of Health and Wellness, Mireille Wenger added, “Breast cancer is the most common cancer affecting women in South Africa, and it is deeply concerning that research shows more than half of women are only diagnosed when the disease has reached an advanced stage. We know that early detection can make a life-changing difference, and we want more women to have that chance. So, this Breast Cancer Awareness Month please make your breast health a priority. Speak to your healthcare provider about screening, be aware of changes in your body and don’t delay seeking help if something doesn’t feel right. Taking that first step could save your life.”

Twenty New Firefighters Join the Fire Service Fraternity

The Cape Winelands District Municipality (CWDM) Fire Services Training Academy celebrated a significant milestone on Friday, 16 October 2026, as 20 aspiring firefighters officially joined the fire service fraternity during a Passing Out Parade held in Stellenbosch.

The graduates, who came from across the Cape Winelands District, began their journey at the Academy on 13 July 2026 as strangers. Eight weeks later, they marched off the parade grounds as a unified team, bound by shared experiences, challenges and a commitment to serving their communities. The youngest learner in the class was 20 years old, while the oldest was 35.

During the intensive eight-week programme, the students successfully completed the Firefighter 1 as well as Hazardous Materials (Hazmat) Awareness and Operations courses.

The graduates endured long days, early mornings and late nights, balancing demanding practical training with classroom studies. For many, the challenge extended beyond the training grounds as they continued to fulfil their responsibilities as sons, husbands, partners and fathers at home. Addressing the Spring Class of 2026, Executive Mayor Ald (Dr) Elna von Schlicht reflected on what would be her final Passing Out Parade as Executive Mayor of the Cape Winelands District Municipality. “Graduates, I welcome you into this fraternity. Serve with courage. Serve with compassion. Serve with honour. And always make the communities you serve proud of the uniform you wear.”

In a symbolic candle-lighting ceremony, the Executive Mayor formally handed the baton to the administrative leadership, expressing her confidence in their ability to continue the outstanding work achieved during her tenure and to lead Fire Services into its next chapter under the new leadership.

The graduates received Statements of Results for the NFPA 1001 Programme, with certificates presented by Executive Mayor Ald (Dr) Elna von Schlicht, Executive Deputy Mayor Ald Margie Sampson, Speaker Donovan Joubert and Portfolio Holder for Fire Services Ald Regie Farao. They were joined by Chief Fire Officer Wayne Josias, Municipal Manager Henry Prins and Executive Director: Community Development and Planning Services Pietie Williams.One of the most moving moments of the ceremony unfolded when the audience erupted in cheers, embodying the spirit of ubuntu and demonstrating that every graduate’s achievement was celebrated as a collective success. Embodying the spirit of ubuntu and demonstrating that every graduate’s achievement was celebrated as a collective success. Proud parents, grandparents, spouses, children and supporters filled the venue with applause and words of encouragement.

Throughout the ceremony, one message rang clear: “We love you. We are proud of you.”

The Academy also recognised outstanding achievement through its Awards of Excellence:
Student of the Course: Edwill Pietersen

Best Theoretical Student (Firefighter 1): Mark-Junior Hendricks

Best Theoretical Student (Hazmat Awareness): Mark- Junior Hendricks

Best Theoretical Student (Hazmat Operations): Luthando Tloti

Best Practical Student (Firefighter 1): Nashwell Vermeulen

Best Practical Student (Hazmat Operations): Matthayo September

Most Improved Student (Heinrich Louw Award): Mulder Steyn

Most Disciplined Student: Reagan Fielies

Drawing on his own experiences in the fire service, Chief Fire Officer Wayne Josias encouraged the graduates to remain lifelong learners, embrace opportunities for growth and seek wisdom from those who have gone before them. He expressed confidence that the future of community safety is in capable hands.Reflecting on the experience, graduate Mulder Steyn described the programme as “the most fun they would never want to have again.” He added that, despite its challenges, the course taught the class a code to live by and values they would carry throughout their careers. He said he would not trade the experience shared with his brothers for anything.

The ceremony featured several memorable traditions, including the ringing of the bell ceremony, the firefighter’s prayer and the highly anticipated squad drill display, all of which served as reminders of the proud traditions and responsibilities associated with the profession. As they marched off the parade grounds, the graduates left with more than certificates. They departed with a responsibility to protect and serve their communities and to uphold the values instilled in them by the Academy.



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R1.165 billion road investment advances Franschhoek Pass flood recovery and regional connectivity

The Western Cape Government’s Department of Infrastructure is making significant progress on the R1.165 billion MR191 road improvement project and associated flood-damage repairs along the Franschhoek Pass, strengthening road safety, regional connectivity and infrastructure resilience.

The project, which includes road upgrades, resurfacing and extensive repairs following severe flooding, is scheduled for completion in July 2027, subject to favourable construction conditions. It is expected that Franschhoek Pass will be open for the builder’s break from mid-December to mid-January subject to stop/go controls. However, if there are any safety concerns, the road will remain closed to traffic until safe conditions can be restored.

Rebuilding stronger infrastructure after severe flooding

The Franschhoek Pass sustained extensive damage following severe rainfall in October 2023, which resulted in 16 slope failures/ slips. Further heavy rainfall in May 2026 caused five additional slips and erosion at the Du Toits River bridge abutment on the Villiersdorp side.

These events highlighted the vulnerability of critical road infrastructure to extreme weather and the importance of investing in long-term resilience. The additional flood-damage repairs have been incorporated into the broader MR191 upgrading project.

Significant upgrades across the road network

The project includes:

Widening and upgrading approximately 9.57 km of MR191 between Old Paarl Road (MR189) and Helshoogte Road (MR172) to a Class 1 road. Repairing approximately 14km between the Helshoogte intersection and the Franschhoek urban area.Repairing approximately 16 km between Franschhoek and the Theewaterskloof Dam.Upgrading and maintaining drainage structures to improve stormwater management.
Reconstructing damaged road surfaces and stabilising vulnerable slopes. Specialised engineering interventions include soil nails, high-strength steel mesh, anchored gabion walls and reinforced concrete slope protection.Work is also progressing on asphalt surfacing, pavement reconstruction, drainage improvements and repairs to the Du Toits River bridge abutment.

These interventions are designed both to repair existing damage and also to improve the road’s ability to withstand future severe weather events.

Creating opportunities for local communities

Beyond the physical infrastructure improvements, the project is generating measurable economic benefits for surrounding communities.

So far:

94 090 person-days of local labour have been delivered, exceeding the target of 70,160.
357 work opportunities have been created against a target of 440.
57 local enterprises have supplied goods and services, exceeding the target of 40.
Six emerging contractors have benefited through subcontracting opportunities, meeting the project’s target.
R141.15 million has been directed towards targeted enterprises, exceeding the R126.17 million target.
Infrastructure investment that delivers lasting benefits

Minister Simmers said:
“The damage caused by successive flooding events reminds us why investing in resilient infrastructure is so important.“We are not simply repairing damaged roads. We are strengthening vital transport connections, improving road safety and investing in infrastructure that must serve our communities and economy for years to come.

“Equally important is the economic value created during construction. With more than 94,000 person-days of local labour and over R141 million directed towards targeted enterprises, this project demonstrates how infrastructure investment can support livelihoods and create opportunities for local businesses“Our commitment remains to deliver infrastructure that is safer, more resilient and capable of supporting economic growth across the Western Cape.”

Looking ahead

Construction and flood-recovery works will continue across the identified sections, with completion anticipated in July 2027.
The Department of Infrastructure remains committed to restoring damaged transport infrastructure while improving long-term road safety, connectivity and resilience

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Drakenstein thrilled to welcome world-renowned Absa Cape Epic back in 2027

Drakenstein Municipality is preparing to welcome the world-renowned Absa Cape Epic back in 2027,with Wellington hosting the final three days of what many consider one of the worlds premier mountain bike stage races.

From 26 to 28 March 2027, the race will place Wellington in the international spotlight as hundreds of elite and amateur riders, support crews, media representatives and spectators converge on the municipal area. The route enters Drakenstein during Stage 5 from Tulbagh to Wellington and remains in the municipal area for the Queen Stage and grand finale at Imbuko Wines.

The event will showcase Wellington and the surrounding area's spectacular landscapes, world-class mountain bike trails, authentic hospitality and vibrant tourism offering to a global audience, while providing a valuable boost to the local economy.

The announcement follows Drakenstein Municipality's successful hosting of several stages of the 2025 race predominantly in the Paarl area, which drew participants and supporters from around South Africa and abroad. According to the 2025 Absa Cape Epic event summary, 53% of the 1 300 riders were international participants, mainly from Europe, the United States of America, Brazil and England. Of these riders, 14% were visiting South Africa for the first time. In addition to the eight race days, 75% of the international participants spent a further five days touring South Africa.

Councillor Stephen Korabie, Executive Mayor of Drakenstein Municipality, welcomes the return of the event. "The Absa Cape Epic places the Paarl-Wellington area on the global stage. Beyond the sporting spectacle, it puts our landscapes, hospitality, tourism offerings and outdoor adventure assets on display to millions of viewers across the world."Drakenstein is thrilled to once again be welcoming riders, teams and supporters in 2027 and we look forward to the economic opportunities this event will create for local businesses and communities.

Events of this calibre strengthen our position as a leading destination for tourism, adventure and major sporting events," says the Executive Mayor. Global exposure for Drakenstein The Absa Cape Epic is among the most watched mountain biking events in the world, attracting extensive international television, digital and social media coverage. The race is broadcast to audiences across the globe through live streaming, daily highlights packages and extensive media reporting. During the 2025 event, the live feed on the Absa Cape Epic's dedicated YouTube channel received 1 205 530 views, and the action was viewed 279 769 times on Facebook, with viewers spending an average of 28 minutes following the live action. Its innovative broadcast model incorporates helicopters, drones, camera motorbikes, e-bikes and finish-line cameras to bring every stage to viewers in real time, highlighting not only the race itself but also the host destinations along the route.

For Drakenstein, this exposure provides a unique opportunity to promote the areas natural beauty,tourism experiences, accommodation establishments, wine farms, restaurants and outdoor lifestyle to prospective visitors from around the world.Economic benefits beyond the finish line The economic impact of the Absa Cape Epic extends well beyond race week. According to Councillor Laurichia van Niekerk, Mayoral Committee Member for Tourism, Sport and Recreation at Drakenstein Municipality, the event remains one of the most valuable tourism platforms available to the area."The Absa Cape Epic attracts high-value visitors from around the world and creates opportunities across the tourism value chain. The benefits are felt by accommodation establishments, restaurants, tourism operators, service providers, sport and outdoor businesses, as well as other local businesses," says Councillor Van Niekerk.
Equally important is the global exposure that the event generates.

"The Absa Cape Epic gives Paarl-Wellington the opportunity to shine as a destination worth visiting long after the race has ended, and it contributes to our long-term tourism growth," says Cheryl Phillips,Senior Manager: Economic Development and Tourism at the Municipality.
A destination of choice The popularity of the Absa Cape Epic, with entries traditionally selling out shortly after opening,highlights the appeal of both the event and its host destinations. Drakenstein's combination of rugged mountain landscapes, scenic vineyards, outdoor adventure experiences and internationally recognised trail networks makes it an ideal setting for a world-class mountain biking event.

As preparations are underway for the 2027 race, Drakenstein Municipality looks forward to working closely with event organisers, tourism stakeholders and local communities to ensure another memorable experience for participants, visitors and residents.





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