

## EC students dive in to explore SA's maritime opportunities

A new maritime awareness programme has launched to encourage South Africa's youth to not only explore the endless possibilities of a career in the maritime industry, but to also immerse themselves into a future career in the oceans economy. Over 450 learners from 25 different Eastern Cape high schools as well as students and interested members of the community attended the **Dive In! Maritime Career Exploration Expo** at the East London ICC on 4 September 2019.



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The pilot, in a series of career expos planned by SAIMI, to be rolled out to other coastal provinces in 2020 was successfully hosted in East London.

The expo and interactive displays showcased a wide variety of study and career opportunities in and around the oceans, introducing the learners to diverse maritime career options such as ship builders, oil rig engineers, maritime lawyers and conservationists.

The learners also took part in interactive experiences including a tour of the Port of East London, experiencing a SA Police Service (SAPS) patrol boat drill and exploring sailing boats. They also engaged with youth who have already 'dived in' to the maritime world, including trainee seafarers from SAIMI's National Cadet Programme and young sailors from the Royal Cape Yacht Club Academy maritime youth development programme.

Ikhona Mabhedeng, one of the attendees, said: "Today was awesome – I am very interested and learnt a lot. I didn't know about all these opportunities, and we can now go out and tell other people about it."

Aspiring marine biologist, Thato Thebehadi, also enjoyed the day. "I have seen a lot of things and got new study ideas. As students we look forward to experiencing these interesting things. The way things were explained was really great - especially how the boats work and the machines. I am also interested in being a Cadet and can't wait to feel the breeze of the sea air."

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Exhibitors included companies such as African Marine Solutions (AMSOL), research agencies including the SA Environmental Observation Network (SAEON), along with Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA), SA Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA), the Transport Education and Training Authority (TETA) and government departments that have partnered with SAIMI in the national maritime awareness programme.

Education and training institutions included Nelson Mandela University and University of Fort Hare and Buffalo City College who showcased their maritime-related courses, along with related sector education and training authorities (SETAs).

The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries' aquaculture advisor Keagan Halley presented an interactive session to the learners on aquaculture-related careers.

"Our presentation to the learners specifically emphasised aquaculture as a career field, since there is so much scope to get into the industry. These opportunities include research and activities around the farm - such as marketing and value-adding, or artisanal career opportunities. Even though some of the learners may not have maths and science as subjects at school, there are still areas to go into because aquaculture is a business," said Halley.

## **Exploring a pooling together of resources**

Running parallel with the expo was a Stakeholder Engagement Session for Maritime Awareness with various representatives from the public and private sector participating in a lively discussion. The purpose of the session was to explore collaborative ways of achieving the common goals of promoting maritime education and training, as well as exponential job creation and growth within the oceans economy.

Having a stronger and more integrated impact together, the multi-stakeholder task team, which is led by SAIMI, includes representatives from the SA Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA); the Transport Education and Training Authority (TETA); the departments of Labour; Higher Education, Science and Technology; Basic Education; Transport; Public Works; Environmental Affairs, Forestry and Fisheries; Government Communications and Information Services; Tourism; the SA Police Service; and the National Skills Fund.

SAIMI acting CEO Odwa Mtati said the event was also the official launch of the national "Dive In" Maritime Awareness Programme – a collaborative campaign that aims to raise awareness of the importance of the oceans economy.

"The national maritime awareness campaign is intended to raise consciousness that South Africa IS a maritime nation and by growing awareness of the opportunities for careers, employment, business, upliftment of communities, we aim to grow participation in the oceans economy and position South Africa as Africa's leading maritime nation," Mtati said.

SAIMI Operations Director Soraya Artman introduced the creative multi-media and multi-platform campaign that will use a combination of media, resources, activities and activations to get a wider audience engaged and interested in the maritime economy.

"The maritime awareness campaign will roll out from here into various activations involving the youth, educators, previously excluded groups such as women and disabled people, business – especially entrepreneurs and SMME's, and coastal communities," said Artman.

## **Calling for more maritime awareness**

Artman also announced that SAIMI will shortly issue a call for proposals for projects that SAIMI could support to build out the national maritime campaign and give it life.

"We will be looking for ideas around promoting awareness and appreciation of the maritime environment and economy, particularly where there is a focus on skills development and capacity building for participation in the maritime economy, maritime careers, and/or group participation in ocean-based sports, recreation, cultural, community development, coastal/marine environmental conservation, and related/similar activities," said Artman.

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