

# Pamela Nkuna takes the lead at SA Liquor Brandowners Association

By  Lauren Hartzenberg

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Pernod Ricard's corporate affairs director Pamela Nkuna has taken on the additional role of chairperson at South African Liquor Brandowners Association (Salba), an NPO representing manufacturers and distributors in the liquor industry on issues of common interest. Effective late last year, Nkuna replaces Sibani Mngadi as chairperson.



Pamela Nkuna, Salba chairperson. Source: Supplied.

Among Salba's members are industry-leading alcohol companies including Distell, Heineken, Diageo, Pernod Ricard and DGB. As part of the association's mandate, it aims to promote the long-term sustainability of its liquor business members through responsible brand building in a competitive environment.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, associations such as Salba played a notable role by acting as a mouthpiece for the liquor trade, articulating the industry's position in respect of the alcohol bans and highlighting the impact that these have had on the alcohol value chain and in fostering the growth of illicit trade in the country.



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With the topic of alcohol misuse coming to the fore during the pandemic, Nkuna's experience on the board of NPO Aware.org, which works to develop a culture of responsible drinking in SA, stands her in good stead to help advance Salba's commitment to harm reduction initiatives.

In addition to this, Nkuna boasts over 10 years of experience in the alcohol industry, focusing on regulatory matters and stakeholder engagement at national government and provincial levels and with local, civil society and NGOs.

Commenting on Nkuna's appointment, Salba CEO Kurt Moore commented, "Pamela's appointment comes at a crucial point for the alcohol industry as we start to rebuild our economy and focus on the future of a post-pandemic world. Her experience in regulatory matters and her work on harm reduction will be critical in steering the industry during this next season..."

We chatted to Nkuna to find out what's on her to-do list as Salba's new chairperson, and what the road to recovery is looking like for the alcohol industry.

■ ***Pamela, congrats on your selection as chairperson of the South African Liquor Brandowners Association. What's at the top of your to-do list in your new role?***

Thanks so much. I am very happy to have been appointed. During my tenure, I would like to strategically elevate Salba to operate with maximum impact. By this, I mean strengthening existing key stakeholder relationships and mapping out our most important objectives to ensure that our industry continues to operate in a fair and open market.

■ ***How do you think your positions at Pernod Ricard and Aware.org have prepared you for this additional responsibility as Salba chairperson?***

At Pernod Ricard, I was initially appointed as the head of corporate affairs and recently to corporate affairs director. I am responsible for both sustainability and responsibility as well as regulatory and public affairs. The leadership at Pernod Ricard fully supports my appointment and is always readily available to equip me with the necessary tools required for me to achieve the desired impact.

Working with Aware.org since its launch and now being appointed as director of the Aware.org board has equipped me with a detailed understanding of what is needed to reduce harmful consumption of alcohol in SA.



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■ ***It's been a tough two years for businesses in your industry with a handful of alcohol bans implemented during the pandemic. What's the road to recovery been like and looking like moving forward?***

It may be too early to say, but I believe we are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Government acted responsibly during the fourth wave and did not impose restrictions on a sector struggling to recover from the previous measures and allowing the alcohol, tourism, restaurant and hospitality sectors to continue to trade as normal during the festive season.

Going forward, the industry remains committed to helping rebuild our economy and focus on the future of a post-pandemic world. We can do this by ramping up the vaccination programmes urgently as is being done in other countries, imposing common-sense limits to unsafe gatherings and following the basic health protocols of wearing face masks in public, social distancing and basic hygiene.

■ ***Where do you think the most work needs to be done in limiting harmful alcohol consumption and related behaviour? What role do liquor companies have to play in this?***

In addressing the major problem of alcohol misuse in the country, it is vital that we work to change behaviours with regards to harmful alcohol consumption. This requires a multi-stakeholder, multi-faceted approach which includes taking interventions into communities and creating opportunities for change that can grow into sustainable impact in the long term.

These interventions must be evidence-based with clear and concise key performance indicators that achieve the desired impact of reducing harmful consumption of alcohol.

Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the progress is key. Impact assessments would be advantageous. In order for these programmes to be impactful, we need to do the necessary research, to understand what the challenges are and to continuously monitor and evaluate the progress.

In order to make South Africans aware of the need for socially responsible alcohol consumption, the alcohol industry has invested more than R450m in funding programme interventions and initiatives through Aware.org, the not-for-profit organisation funded by the alcohol industry.

Its mandate is to reduce the harmful consumption of alcohol with a focus on drunk driving and walking; underage drinking; binge drinking; Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD); responsible trading; responsible marketing and social norms, public education and awareness campaigns.

■ ***What do you enjoy most about your work in the industry?***

I really love being able to merge my qualifications and my passion to make a meaningful difference in society. I enjoy being part of the solution to societal ills both from a strategic and regulatory point of view, as well as from a hands-on approach to helping society.

I love working with the most passionate people across the industry, private sector, government, and civil society. Even though we all come from different backgrounds and cultures, when it comes to doing what is right for society, we all work hand in hand as a strong united force fighting for humanity. That satisfaction is what drives me to do more.



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■ ***In your opinion, what are the qualities of a great leader?***

A great leader is one who leads by example, displaying qualities of transparency, integrity, tactfulness and strategy. A great leader does the necessary research, displays empathy, strategically assesses the situation and then tactfully responds.

■ ***In closing, what impact do you hope to make in your industry?***

I hope to make meaningful change to society and continue to strengthen partnerships with government and our stakeholders. Leading the industry's social responsibility is both a professional and personal cause and I am grateful for the opportunity.

## ABOUT LAUREN HARTZENBERG

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