

Mpumalanga tourism title contract awarded

An empowerment consortium led by grassroots publisher HomeGrown Magazines has been awarded a three-year exclusive licence to publish Mpumalanga's official tourism magazine. HomeGrown JV will publish the Mpumalanga Tourism & Parks Agency (MTPA)'s *Sunrise* magazine and affiliated products launching with a Spring 2008 edition and running until July 2011 - covering the crucial period over the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

The MTPA last week awarded the contract to a special purpose joint venture between HomeGrown Magazines and local empowerment company Kasi Media after a lengthy evaluation and due diligence process.

The quarterly *Sunrise* magazine is targeted at inbound leisure and business travellers, using worldclass writers and photographers to showcase the province's diverse tourism and cultural product. It will also be distributed to the hospitality and travel trade, including inward bound airline lounges, and will also be stocked by select news agents nationwide.

“Complete editorial freedom”

“MTPA have given us complete editorial freedom to ensure that the content is top quality - and not the kind of promotional fluff that is often found in marketing magazines. Quality is what matters, and we therefore intend producing an award-winning magazine,” says HomeGrown JV publisher Justin Arenstein.

Additional targeted trade newsletters will be published to serve travel agents and the inbound industry, with separate specialist newsletters for Mpumalanga-based hospitality operators and product owners.

“We awarded this vital contract to HomeGrown because of its exceptional track-record for publishing worldclass regional magazines. Their track-record for operating these kinds of niche publications profitably and for pioneering effective distribution strategies in rural markets were important considerations,” says MTPA's acting marketing director, Ezrom Sekgobela.

HomeGrown Magazines is the Nelspruit-based publisher of regional glossy lifestyle magazine *Lowveld Living*, and has over the past year expanded to also publish the *Limpopo Living* and *Highveld Living* magazines.

Attracted the interest of Media24

HomeGrown Magazines' business model and high production standards have attracted the interest of Media24, which through its Witness Group entered into a joint venture with the company in late 2007 to co-publish *Midlands Life* in KwaZulu Natal.

The company also operates a specialist event management agency, HomeGrown Happenings, and a full service creative studio, HomeGrown Graffix, that provides above-the-line advertising services, marketing, and media strategy services to local corporate clients.

The HomeGrown group may be grassroots, but is not confined to local markets. The company is affiliated with the international award-winning wire agency, African Eye News Service (AENS), which represents the nation's largest newspapers in Mpumalanga and which supplies virtually all breaking news from the region read in global media. HomeGrown stakeholders also own a 10% stake in the region's only commercial radio station, MPowerFM.

Kasi Media is meanwhile a new multimedia empowerment company benefiting mid-level and senior staff at AENS. The MTPA contract is its first major deal.

“Mid-career rural journalists often have no choice but to move to the big cities if they want to grow. AENS's establishment of Kasi Media is meant to give them a choice -and in so doing, help reverse the brain-drain. It gives exceptional rural journalists a stake in local media ownership, and a chance to help transform the industry,” says Kasi Media director, Tshwarelo Mogakane.

“The result is a journalist-owned grassroots media company that is rooted in the kasi and that speaks to kasi aspirations.”

HomeGrown Magazine's award-winning editor-in-chief, Fiona Macleod, will manage *Sunrise* and will mentor Kasi Media's directors to play an active, hands-on role in the management and production of the magazine.

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