

**PRESS RELEASE FROM THE RICHMOND COMMUNITY**

**DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION / BOOKTOWN RICHMOND**

**TUESDAY MARCH 15, 2022**

Booktown Richmond and their iconic book festival BookBedonnerd are established names on the literary circuit of South Africa.

Booktown Richmond is the only Booktown (like Hay-on-Wye) on the African continent. It is the brand behind such iconic festivals as the Madibaland World Literary Festival and the SA Festival of Children's Literature, organised in partnership with the University of the Western Cape. The entire enterprise is run by Darryl David, the only Indian lecturer of Afrikaans in SA and the mastermind behind Booktown Richmond, as well as Peter Baker, an ex-Canadian vet, lover of books, the Karoo and Richmond in particular.

For years the festival was supported by the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture in the Northern Cape and to a lesser degree by Experience Northern Cape, the tourism arm (suffering from extended paralysis) of the Northern Cape.

From 2019, Arts and Culture abruptly cut funding to Booktown Richmond without any explanation or warning. This was no doubt in retaliation for BTR's vociferous criticism of the ANC nationally and in the Northern Cape.

At the start of 2021 Darryl David contacted Desty van der Merwe of the Northern Cape Tourism Authority to find out if the Northern Cape would fund Booktown Richmond. After promising that they would, and after many months of dithering, they eventually agreed to fund BTR to the tune of 100k. This is the same quantum of sponsorship since the inception of provincial government support.

For months thereafter they failed to provide a contract. Literally a month before the festival, even though they had every single document, they contacted Peter who was in Canada at the time requesting more documentation, which they had already received twice before. Patently, the department was a shambolic mess of disorganisation. Eventually a Service Delivery Contract was signed, not a penny was paid over to BTR.

The build up to the festival was very stressful. It must be born in mind that the organisers were personally responsible for reservations made in the several guest houses used to accommodate the guest speakers. They had given

undertakings to guesthouses that they would personally pay for writers' accommodation if NC Tourism did not.

In the last week, before the start of the festival the department indicated that it refused to pay for the bookbinding course (R14K) which BTR had been sponsoring for many years. Interestingly the people who are receiving the instruction are school librarians from the Northern Cape! Booktown Richmond has championed bookbinding as a job creation project since the very first festival. Not only has it created permanent employment for several town's folk, it also has the potential to expand into a full-fledged book restoration enterprise in Richmond. Out of loyalty Master Bookbinder George Wentzel paid from his own pocket to offer the course.

Booktown Richmond is the only stage upon which independent publishers are recognised in the entire country. Their flagship SA INDEPENDENT PUBLISHERS AWARDS is a hugely sought after prize and the custom made Dlamini award statues are a very treasured memento. The department said they would not pay for the Dlamini statues made by artist Trayci Tompkins because they did not include the department's logo on the statue. This was a preposterous request and it had never been required in all of the many past years. The organisers had already ordered and paid for the Dlaminis. The department then indicated that it would purchase locally made and suitable

award prizes. Needless to say, this never materialized. The department did though withhold the monies that had been quoted, as part of the grant, from the actual payment into the BTR bank account which is held in the name of the Richmond Community Development Foundation (a section 21 company , not for gain).

Then to exacerbate an already serious situation for the financing of the festival, the organisers were told that the Department, ( they were dealing with the CEO Sharron Lewis, Dianna Martin, GM Marketing and Promotions, and Events Coordinator, Desty van der Merwe) would only be paying R47K, despite a letter written by them to be signed by Peter and sent back to them indicating that the organisers would receive a R50K advance to pay for their already incurred expenses to date. This would partially cover the outlays for printing of brochures, posters, and pamphlets, branded t-shirts etc. This was on day 1 of the festival!!!

They claimed they had to subtract a marketing fee for an advertisement they took out with OFM, which is as yet unconfirmed. When asked for proof and content of the purported advertisement, they failed to provide any. It is to be wondered how they could do justice in advertising the festival when neither they nor OFM had ever contacted Peter Baker or Darryl David, the chief

organisers. Until today, they have failed to provide any proof for this "expense".

Furthermore, they indicated that they were withholding our funding to pay the street cleaners and car guards as they would be engaging them directly. This was an arbitrary decision made with no consultation with either of the organisers who had already hired and paid for several of these helpers. Later when documents were submitted requesting payment of the balance on the R100K sponsorship the department, in particular Dianna Martin, indicated the format required in order for them to pay for the remuneration for the daily workers. She was so kind as to send Peter Baker a list of the people she had employed ( here it must pointed out that neither Darryl David nor Peter Baker ever caught sight of Miss Martin at the Booktown Headquarters or anywhere in the village where all of the activities were taking place for the entire festival period) and the format required in order that they would consider compensating the organisers for their outlay. Baker kept the Christian names and contact numbers, and some of the SAID numbers of all the volunteers employed. He felt this was adequate as he knew everyone of them personally and they all knew him. Martin sent Baker her list of the people she employed in the days preceding BookBedonnerd and as it happened the local elections.

Baker, with Martin's list in hand, called several of the young men and ladies on her list and inquired as to the duties they performed, and the remuneration received. As Baker is well known in the village through the Booktown reputation each of the young people contacted readily revealed what they had in fact done for the remuneration received. He was shocked to hear that each of the over half dozen people he spoke to indicated that they cleaned the election hall put up election posters and went on a door to door campaign for the election. It is presumed that this was in order to canvas for the ANC. Not one of these young people came into the village where the festival was being staged and not one of them indicated that they did anything in the "location" to clean up litter and rubbish, or promote the BookBedonnerd festival which was taking place in the village. It is believed that they were paid by the department from the money allotted to the Richmond Community Development Foundation under Peter Baker's name in order to party politic for the ANC. This is scandalous.

Baker ascertained in conversations with just some of the workers that tourism hired, among others, Pet\*\*\* who was paid R260 for 4 days work (the agreed upon rate was R150 per day), Cay\*\*\*\*\* who was paid R150 for 3 days work, and And\*\*\* who worked for three days and was paid R150 per day for cleaning the election hall and for taking election material to houses.

Miss Sharron Lewis called Darryl David when she learned that Helen Zille was invited to speak on her latest book and to officially open the festival on the Thursday. She demanded to know how they could use "their" money for a DA rally.

During the Fridays morning talks in the old library on Loop Street; remember that we were all in pre-election mode here, a bus load of supposed DA supporters drove down the street with lots of noise and cheering from the people in the village. Baker, who was in the library only caught a glimpse of the bus as it went by. However, within 10 minutes he received a telephone call from Lewis, the CEO of Tourism chastising him for giving the DA a platform and threatening to organise a bus load of ANC supporters to inundate the Book Festival. Baker made it bitterly clear to her that she had received very bad and fallacious intel and that he could not continue to deal with such a degree of incompetence, malevolence, and prejudice. She later called Baker to apologise, but the true colours and real nature of the department were by that stage more than abundantly clear.

As a foot note to the casual workers which Booktown has always hired, even before receiving public funding, and who perform a duty in cleaning up the usually litter strewn village, the Northern Cape Tourism Authority made it clear that the monies were to their mind only a social upliftment project (as well as

cheap labour to promote the ANC) and had nothing to do with the embellishment of a tourist destination during the highlight of the tourist drawing event.

The Richmond Community Development Foundation has been defrauded of R53,000 and the Northern Cape Department of Tourism, through its employees, Lewis, Martin, and van der Merwe stand accused of perpetrating this crime for purely politically corrupt reasons. They should be held accountable and personally liable, and ultimately criminally prosecuted.

Booktown Richmond has been the only live literary event for the past two years in South Africa, and it is a beacon of light in an otherwise dismal landscape in the South African world of Arts and Culture. This mis-use of funds for a genuine and longstanding event in the Northern Cape will only add fuel to the raging narrative that the morally bankrupt ANC uses public money to further its slanted agenda. It belies what Cyril Ramaphosa has said, that no public money has ever been diverted from the public fiscus to serve the ANC. This is patently a lie to South Africa.

**The Richmond Community Development Foundation**

**Booktown Richmond**

**Peter Baker**

**Darryl David**

