



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **A Successful holiday season for Knysna**

Mr Kam Chetty, Knysna Municipal Manager, said that advance planning and preparation ensured that the busy summer holiday period ran smoothly. “As always, it was an extremely busy time for us and our staff pulled out all the stops to ensure a well-functioning town, especially during peak periods when the population just about doubles.”

Chetty said that an essential part of the preparation process was employing and training temporary staff. “Our full time staff component cannot cope alone with the influx of visitors. This year we employed 24 point duty personnel to help with traffic flow, 48 additional law enforcement officers and 37 lifeguards a day. We used the ward base tender staff for cleaning, and only needed an additional 8 temporary cleaners.”

“Sadly 5 houses burnt down and our Disaster Management Department assisted where they could. There were numerous other fires in the outlying areas, but nothing major. We are extremely happy to report that there were no fatalities at any of our beaches, and the lifesavers on duty rescued 18 people over this period.”

Heavy traffic is one of the main concerns during the holiday period. “We set up numerous road blocks with Provincial traffic with special focus on vehicles being road worthy, obeying traffic rules and had a zero tolerance stance with drivers under the influence.”

In terms of visitor numbers, Chetty said that statistics supplied by Knysna Tourism showed that some retailers reported very positive growth in December 2017 of up to 16% compared to 2016, while others reported they were on a par with last year and a few were below.

Chairperson of Knysna Tourism, Elmay Boucher, said that in the accommodation sector, local B&Bs and guesthouses appear to be slightly down on average for December 2017 compared to 2016. “This mirrors the statistics from Stats SA which show that overall domestic tourism was down by 6%, although some local hotels report an average occupancy above that of last year.”

She said the impact of Airbnb’s on the accommodation sector remains unknown, but the company has certainly made inroads into Knysna and affected the bookings of traditional B&Bs and guesthouses.

“Self-catering establishments showed positive growth compared to last year which reflects the fact that in this poor economy domestic tourists with less disposable income have opted for more cost effective accommodation. This was further confirmed by the enquiries made at the Knysna

Visitor Information centre where there was a nightly accommodation threshold of between R1,000 to R1,200 per room per night for B&Bs.”

Bouwer said local restaurants reported a slow start to December and late pickup which came from international tourists specifically in the last four to five days of December.

“Activities in Knysna appear to have been busier than ever. Both the Knysna Tourism and Sedgefield visitor information centres were also busier than last year with a total of 4,287 visitors compared to 3,767 in 2016. This 13.5% increase was made up of international tourists, specifically from the UK, Germany, Switzerland and France.”

Chetty said despite a successful season, there are still challenges. “Illegal fireworks and the policing thereof remains a problem. We are also concerned about the water situation in our area. The coming months are historically dry and hot months, please adhere to water restrictions and continue to be water wise.”

“In conclusion, I want to thank all the staff that worked long, hard hours to make sure all our visitors had a great experience. Not just the Municipal staff, but also those working for retailers and shops, restaurants, accommodation establishments and other tourism industries. This peak holiday period is absolutely essential to maintain Knysna’s economy and we appreciate the part you played to make that happen.”

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