

SAE4D issues challenge for National Transport Month

October is National Transport month in South Africa. During this month, everyone is encouraged to use public transport on at least one day. Many politicians, celebrities and prominent business people abandon their private cars and heed the call.

This year, South African Employers for Disability (SAE4D), an employer organisation that is committed to addressing issues confronting the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace, is issuing this challenge to those planning to get into the spirit on Transport Month: use a wheelchair. If you don't have access to a wheelchair, make the trip with a large, very heavy suitcase.

SAE4D chairman, Dr Jerry Gule points out that while inadequacies of the public transport system cause inconvenience for most commuters, it isolates people with disabilities.

"It effectively makes it impossible for many potentially economically active individuals to get to and from work. And it hinders many businesses that sincerely wish to employ more people with disabilities from doing so," he says.

Indeed, [it has been estimated](#) that only around one percent of people with disabilities in South Africa are employed.

According to Dr Gule, there are many reasons for this, but a major issue is the fact that only a very small percentage of people with disabilities have access to private vehicles.

In her 2005 thesis for her Masters degree in Town and Regional Planning, "[Investigating the public transport system in Cape Town with reference to special needs passengers](#)", Deidre Ribbonaar stated: "Society suffers in terms of costs due to (people with disabilities) not being able to function independently in normal daily activities. The costs in terms of what society has to give are included in tax increases so as to pay for special assistance to a (person with disability) not being able to access employment opportunities because of an obstructive public transport system."

Dr Gule notes that as a signatory to the 2007 UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, South Africa is required to develop a public transport network that accommodates people with disabilities.

“South Africa also has a plethora of legislation relating to the need to include people with disabilities into the country’s economic and social mainstream starting with the Constitution. There have also been numerous policy and legislative directives over the years which emphasise the need to make our public transport system more accessible. But this is not being translated into action quickly enough.

“Indeed, SAE4D is concerned that the Department of Transport’s [latest strategic plan](#) for 2012 – 2014 makes no mention of the needs of people with disabilities,” he adds.

“It is therefore vitally important we use National Transport month to highlight the ongoing exclusion of one significant group of people from our public transport system – people with disabilities.”

Ends

About SAE4D

South African Employers for Disability (SAE4D) is a body constituted by employers who are committed to addressing issues confronting the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace. The organisation was set up to share experience, develop best practices, confront and tackle prejudices that act as barriers to the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace, and form a common understanding of the challenges and solutions required to fully develop the potential of people with disabilities to contribute meaningfully to society and business.

SAE4D members are South African companies who are signatories to the Constitution of the SAE4D, its principles and values.

Current SAE4D members include: ABB; Absa; Anglo American; Barloworld; Bowman Gilfillan; Edcon; Ernst & Young; Eskom; Glenrand; KPMG; Lorimar; Nedbank; PPC; SAB and Total.

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