

# New Awards Committee members for Tourism Grading Council

The appointment of new members of the Tourism Grading Council, appointed by the Minister of Tourism, has been welcomed by Thembi Kunene, chief quality assurance officer as “a collective of tourism professionals with profound knowledge of the industry and exceptional reputations”.

The new Awards Committee, effective from 1 November 2009, is being chaired by Peter Bacon, the former CE of Sun International and a member of the board of South African Tourism. He will be joined on the committee by individuals whose knowledge of, and expertise in, tourism and tourism business is unsurpassed in South Africa.

Kunene said: “The Awards Committee comprises a collective of individuals who possess profound knowledge about the industry and this knowledge will, no doubt, impact positively on the business of the Tourism Grading Council over the Committee's three-year tenure. On behalf of my team at the Grading Council, I extend heartfelt congratulations on their appointment and we all look forward to working with them.”

## **Members of the new Tourism Grading Council Awards Committee are:**

- Peter Bacon, chairman of the Awards Committee and former CE of Sun International. Bacon retired in June 2009 after a 33-year career with Sun International. He is one of South Africa's best-known and regarded business leaders, and it is widely acknowledged that he has been instrumental in the robust growth of South Africa's tourism and leisure sector in recent years.
- Phillip Thompson has broad experience in property development in southern Africa, North America and the Caribbean. He is highly regarded for expertise in universal accessibility of buildings. Phillip is a principal member of IDC, an architectural consulting group with a special focus on the hospitality industry and hospitality buildings. He has served on the South African Tourism board from 1997 to 2000 and has been directly involved in evaluating and developing standards related to the tourism industry since 1990.
- Smangele Nhlapo, founder and member of Deco File, a 100 percent black female-owned Interior design company specialising in interior architectural design, space planning, interior design, turnkey installations and decor. She boasts an extensive knowledge and understanding of what the décor and design industry entails with exceptional entrepreneurial skills.
- Alan Rombergh is the outgoing chairman of the Tourism Grading Council. A position he held for the past five years.

He is the acting director of the Cape Town Hotel School at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and a founding member and director of the Cape Overberg Tourism Association. He is also a member of the SA Chef's Association. He was also founder member and CEO of Relias Hotel South Africa and has been involved in the accommodation sector of the South African Tourism industry for years.

- Jegie Padmanathan, is the group hotel operations and development executive at Peermont and previous hotel and resort operations manager at Emperor's Palace. Padmanathan joined Emperor's Palace as deputy GM - hotel and resort operations in 2002. He was then promoted to GM - hotel and resort operations at Emperor's Palace in 2003. In 2007, he was appointed group hotel operations and development executive for Peermont.
- Tony Hazel, senior manager (business) at the RCI Group. Previously operations manager at the Mabula Private Game Reserve and operations manager at the Magalies Country Club. Hazel has spent 11 years at Southern Sun Group, where he gained invaluable experience in the hotel-management field. He joined the Southern Sun Group in 1984 as a trainee. He was then promoted to food & beverage manager in 1986, senior assistant food & beverage manager in 1988 and deputy GM/food & beverage manager from 1992 to 1994.
- Mzi Gcanga, principal architect at gmg Design Building Architecture, a director at the Manteku Private Lodge and architectural advisor to Southern Palace in Bizana, Eastern Cape. Gcanga was a senior architect at Osmond Lange Architects in Umtata, Eastern Cape from 1989 to 1993, senior technician at Multidimensional Architects in Umtata, Eastern Cape in 1993, and also senior technician at Sullivan and Hunt Architects in Umtata, Eastern Cape.
- Ahmed Chothia, MD of Galileo SA with more than 25 years experience in the travel and tourism industry. Chothia joined his family's travel agency as a junior travel consultant for a period of three years from 1984 to 1986. In 1987 he was promoted to intermediate travel consultant for a period of four years from 1987 to 1990. From 1991 to 1996 he was appointed as senior travel consultant and travel manager.
- Julian Smith, owner and founder of Julian Décor in Parkhurst, Johannesburg. Having designed for some of the leading South African and international personalities, Smith launched Julian Décor in 2005 to expand his already thriving fashion brand.

## Key responsibility

The Tourism Grading Council Awards Committee's key responsibility is awarding the relevant quality star grading to accommodation establishments that are worthy of the one, two, three, four or five star. The star grading is an independent assurance that helps consumers understand what they can expect of an establishment in terms of quality, services and facilities.

Thembi Kunene, chief quality assurance officer at TGCSA thanked members of the outgoing board for their service to tourism and to working towards maintaining globally competitive standards in hospitality and conferencing in South Africa.

"Under the guidance and leadership of the outgoing Committee, the TGCSA implemented a broad range of initiatives over the last 28 months aimed at dramatically improving the management of quality assurance of tourism accommodation and conferencing facilities in South Africa."

Peter Bacon, who recently took over as the chairman of the Grading Council, emphasised the importance of ensuring that the grading of accommodation establishments and related tourism products and services enjoys the confidence of the industry and the travelling public. "To this end the Grading Council will continue to focus on the integrity of the grading system in co-operation with the industry as well as increasing the number of graded establishments throughout the country. Quality assurance is a pillar of SA Tourism's overall strategy to attract more foreign visitors to the country and our intention is to align our grading system with international best practice."

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