

SurfaceTalk

Autumn 2008



**Much
Asphalt**

The road to the future ...

PLANNING AHEAD

At Much Asphalt we are constantly planning ahead to ensure the sustainability of our service to our clients. In this issue of *Surface Talk* you will see reference to our new power generating equipment for our branches to avoid delays in supply, new bitumen testing capability, and our continued efforts to help empower contractors and improve the skills pool.



A Murray & Roberts company

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BRANCHES COUNTRYWIDE

Surpassing client expectations

*Much Asphalt
chief executive
Phillip Hechter.*



It often takes challenging times – when demand is either booming or weakening, for example – for an industry to pull together in the interests of customer service, quality and, ultimately, survival.

We at Much Asphalt are firmly focused on ensuring that we can deliver the increasing product quantities that will be needed to serve the planned roads infrastructure programme to 2015, not to mention airports and routine road maintenance. To this end we

are engaging with our aggregate suppliers and our bitumen suppliers to plan ahead and avoid potential shortages and bottlenecks that might affect delivery of asphalt to our customers.

While we have full confidence in our suppliers, we have control measures in place to ensure that the components going into our asphalt match up to strict quality standards. We have also ordered generators for all our facilities around the country so that we can continue to supply your needs independently from the national power grid if necessary.

As I mentioned in previous issues of *Surface Talk*, we have large ongoing investments earmarked for capacity building. In particular we are gearing up to supply the

immense needs of the Gauteng Freeway Improvement Plan that is now getting started. We are also supplying large quantities to airports, with Cape Town recently completed, Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth in progress, and Bloemfontein about to commence.

Our strategy at Much Asphalt is to surpass customer expectations in service and quality. To this end, we have signed service level agreements with some clients formalising our future partnership. These agreements are based on close communication between all staff involved on both sides to improve understanding, iron out issues, build relationships and most importantly, ensure that Much Asphalt meets the client's needs every time.

- Phillip Hechter

Bosberaad gives us direction to 2015



The management of Much Asphalt (pictured above) met early this year to map a way forward to 2015. This was an important meeting, with issues raised including the critical skills shortage, scarce raw materials and the quality issues associated with growing demand. Our service to you, our customers, remains our top priority and we are confident that we have the strategies in place to ensure your peace of mind up to 2015 and beyond.

Teamwork ensures sustainability

News from KwaZulu-Natal



Things have been pretty busy in KZN since the beginning of the year, with those of our customers who work for the Department of Transport going all out to get as Much (no pun intended!) asphalt down on the roads as possible before the current financial year end.

This has resulted in our Pietermaritzburg and Empangeni plants enjoying good demand which, combined with Eskom outages, has provided us with some challenges. Let's hope the DOT demand

continues throughout the year.

KZN also saw Brian Mchunu leave his position as Pietermaritzburg branch manager in January to take up his new portfolio as director of strategic business development for the company. We wish Brian well in his important new role and we know we can count on him to keep the KZN operations busy.

Dudu Kubheka has taken over as trainee branch manager at Maritzburg. She has a degree in construction management and

comes to us through the Murray & Roberts graduate development scheme. We wish her a long and fulfilling career at Much Asphalt.

At Coedmore we are now ready to run with décor asphalt and hopefully we can report some successes in the next *Surface Talk*.

- Anthony Allen
Regional Manager KZN

New tests will ensure bitumen quality



New bitumen testing equipment (from left) balance, penetrometer and the Brookfield Viscometer with temperature controller.

Below: Digitally controlled water bath for penetrations.



Regional manager Garth Miller reports that new self-contained bitumen testing facilities have been established at both of Much Asphalt's Western Cape branches, Eerste River and Contermanskloof.

Each branch now has its own laboratory dedicated to bitumen testing. The room temperature can be controlled and a Brookfield Viscometer, a digitally controlled

water bath for penetrations and a Ring and Ball apparatus have been commissioned. Both labs are now equipped to do viscosity, softening point and penetration tests on bitumen, the basic testing requirements for this raw material.

"Previously we assumed the bitumen was in spec, but now we are in a position to check whether this is the case and give the client

peace of mind," says Garth. "We have experienced problems with bitumen quality in the past year or so and decided to invest in this testing capability to stay ahead of the rest and improve our service to our clients."

PERSONALITY PROFILE

Less glamorous, more friendly



Sheral Samuels

So says Sheral Samuels, Much Asphalt credit manager.

While she concedes that the construction industry is a lot less glamorous than the publishing business she left to join Much Asphalt, Sheral Samuels says the friendly people make up for that.

"I am still learning about the construction industry, but then again I always enjoy a new challenge and I must say it is growing on me."

Sheral, a born and bred Capetonian, joined Much Asphalt's head office in Eerste River in November 2006 as credit manager. "I am passionate about credit and enjoy the daily challenges and 'buzz' around this aspect of business," she admits. "The only thing I dislike about my job is not having enough hours in the day."

She says she has always been extremely ambitious and motivated to improve her skills, both in her work

and on a more personal level. In 1997 she completed a management accounting and finance diploma and she is currently studying towards a BTech in credit management through UNISA.

Sheral's first job was as a girl Friday in the toy manufacturing and retail industry, but she soon established herself as an all-round administrator in finance. She went on to manage the finance department at publishing firm Touchline Media and in 2005, due to rapid growth and a finance department restructure, became credit manager.

"When I joined Much, the one thing that stood out was the friendliness of the staff," says Sheral. "Thank you Much for making me feel like I belong. I enjoy the unique culture here, as well as the daily interaction

with clients and colleagues.

"Much Asphalt is extremely strong on customer service and I consider it part of my function to benchmark top quality credit administration by always staying on top of the game."

Sheral is married with two children, a son Matthew (20) and a daughter Lindsay (14). She paints to help her unwind and particularly enjoys abstract art in acrylics.

"I have completed a number of paintings, mainly for home décor. Who knows, maybe one day they will be worth something."

She also serves as a committee member of the Institute of Credit Management (ICM).

Helping to make a difference

On World Aids Day, 1 December 2007, staff of Much Asphalt Benoni handed toys, clothes and sweets to some 70 children cared for at the Children's Home and Nurturing Centre in Dunnottar, Springs. The donation was sponsored by both our Benoni and Kempton Park branches. Taking time out to visit the centre were Benoni staff members (back from left): Gloria Nkuna, Nirasha Rajkumar and Melanie Thomson, pictured here with some of the children and staff.



R2-million for Khayelitsha learners

Much Asphalt will be taking a close involvement in science and maths enrichment for Khayelitsha learners over the next three years, thanks to a grant of almost R2-million from our parent company, Murray & Roberts.

The funds will be used to assist in preparing Khayelitsha secondary school learners for science, engineering and commerce courses at academic universities. The beneficiaries are the Fun'ulwazi grade 8 and 9 enrichment programme and the Get Building programme for academically talented learners in grades 10 to 12 at the Centre of Science and Technology (COSAT) in Khayelitsha.

The grant results from an agreement between Murray & Roberts and the Science Education Resources Initiative (SERI), a Western Cape based, non-profit organisation that works in partnership with COSAT. COSAT is a very successful specialist science, mathematics and information technology school for learners from grade 10 to grade 12, based at the False Bay College in Khayelitsha.

SERI's mission through Fun'ulwazi is to identify learners at primary school who have demonstrated an aptitude for maths and science and to offer 100 selected individuals an enrichment programme in grades 8

and 9 to prepare them to perform to their potential at COSAT. The Get Building programme extends and enriches the knowledge of the learners from grade 10 to grade 12 and equips them with the additional skills they need to successfully study engineering courses at academic tertiary institutions.

COSAT has been very successful in its eight years of existence. In 2006, for the sixth consecutive year, it achieved a 100% matric pass rate. Since its inception, COSAT has consistently produced 40% or more of all higher grade maths and physical science passes in Khayelitsha. Most COSAT matriculants further their studies at tertiary institutions in the Western Cape and COSAT is UCT's largest township-based feeder school in the country.

"With the dire shortage of human resources, specifically in our specialist field of operation, the net for talent



Learners at the Centre of Science and Technology (COSAT) in Khayelitsha, Cape Town.

resourcing must be cast while the pool is in its formative stage," says Much Asphalt's John Onraët, who is championing the initiative on behalf of Murray & Roberts. "We initially provided funding for the SERI programmes last year and have found that they add considerable value in the preparation of previously disadvantaged students to succeed in careers in the engineering and allied fields."

Peter Oxenham, SERI manager, is excited about the three-year grant. "With the funding taken care of, SERI can at last focus almost exclusively on assisting COSAT in the preparation of its learners for science and engineering studies at university."



Brian Mchunu



Herman Marais

New directors

We are sure you will join us in welcoming our two new directors to the Much Asphalt Board.

Brian Mchunu, our Pietermaritzburg branch manager, has been appointed director responsible for strategic business development.

Herman Marais has been promoted from group technical manager – materials, to director: materials technology.

Training women in construction

As part of its strategy to partner with emerging contractors, Much Asphalt is providing training in road maintenance, tendering and procurement for six Western Cape construction companies owned and managed by women.

The companies attending the first of many courses in March this year were Ubuhle Besizwe Services, Lukhlo Training & Development Services, Coalition Trading 1026, NGQ Trading, Isithembiso Suppliers and Riverstone Trading.

The first 10-day, full time module was presented by Johan Greyling of Tjeka Training Solutions, who has extensive experience in all aspects of road maintenance from initial tender through to completion of the work.

By the end of the first module the candidates were able to prepare method statements for specific billed items on small contracts. The second module involves instruction on all the aspects of running a site and carrying out the work. Much Asphalt has absorbed the cost of the training, which is offered free of charge to the candidates.

In collaboration with the Western Cape provincial government, a small, uncomplicated sidewalk rehabilitation project has been identified as a practical exercise for the delegates. The contract, valued at around R400 000 over a four month period, comprises the application of MC3000 along a section of sidewalk near Spier wine estate and includes traffic accommodation.

All the companies involved in our programme will tender competitively for the job and the successful tenderer will be monitored and mentored throughout the contract period by Tjeka Training and the Western Cape government.



Candidates involved in Much Asphalt's course on road maintenance contracting specifically for companies owned and managed by women. The course was run by Johan Greyling of Tjeka Training Solutions (pictured at back).

H/O admin gets a facelift

It is not only our production facilities that are expanding apace to meet increasing demand. We have just completed an overhaul of our head office in Eerste River to accommodate an increase in our administration staff complement. Our new look admin department is up and running and ready to tackle the challenges of another busy year.



Pedal power

Jasper van der Bijl (left), a director on the Gautrain mega-contract in Gauteng, and Tom Gilbert, regional manager of Much Asphalt (Northern Region), relax after completing the Argus cycle tour in Cape Town on Sunday 9 March. Well done to all our staff and customers who participated in the race.

A powerful partnership

Following the renegotiation of our service level agreement with Zebra Bituminous Surfacing last year, we have now concluded a similar agreement with another longtime customer, the Power Group. The signing took place after workshop

sessions in which delegates of both companies (pictured below) together thrashed out details of how best to work together in the future. The agreement makes for a smooth partnership that favours the Power Group's clients by enhancing quality

and service and avoiding delays through good communication and clear understanding of requirements. We are sure you will join us in wishing the Power Group well in celebrating its 25th year of business this year.



As part of its corporate social investment programme, Much has funded the supply and placing of about 1 320m² of asphalt at the new Ramakrisha Clinic in Durban.

The clinic is the medical wing of the Ramakrisha Centre of South Africa and has been providing voluntary medical, relief, nutrition and educational programmes to disadvantaged people for the past 48 years. All services offered by the clinic are provided free.

The project was championed by Much's quality assurance/ HSE manager Raj Rajcoomar and Coedmore branch manager Greg van Wyk.

Much CSI helps build new clinic



Work underway on site (from left) Greg van Wyk, Raj Rajcoomar and Prof VB Jogessar.



Seen at the annual braai in Eerste River ...

Thanks to the 400 clients, suppliers, friends (and a few gatecrashers) who joined the staff and management of Much Asphalt Eerste River at our annual braai in February. As our invitation said, this is the only industry function where contractors, engineers, clients (from three levels of government), suppliers and old friends can get together under the same "roof" to catch up with industry news, renew old acquaintances, improve existing ones and generally enjoy each others' company. As promised, the 2008 braai was as good, if not better, than our previous events.



Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow . . . we produce asphalt!



Check out Much Asphalt's interactive website at www.muchasphalt.co.za for more pictures.

Do you have any interesting news regarding Much Asphalt's people, products or projects? Please contact Lynne Hancock at 082 441-5813 or email lynne@lhcom.co.za