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MEGA-MANGANESE PROJECT ADVANCES

AFTER years of talks about a new high-capacity manganese terminal at Ngqura, Transnet has finally issued a Request for Qualification (RFQ), outlining a sophisticated private-sector partnership structure, including an innovative model that ring-fences investment and separates two sets of risks.

On Friday 25 September, Transnet issued the RFQ, thereby starting the selection process for a strategic partner for the Ngqura Manganese Export Corridor (NMEC) Private Sector Participation (PSP) project for 25 years.

Transnet said the corridor runs from Hotazel in the Northern Cape to the Port of Ngqura in the Eastern Cape, where a new manganese terminal will be built, leading to a forecasted 20% expansion in rail exports.

Following the RFQ phase, Transnet said it will invite parties that meet the qualification requirements to participate in a subsequent Request for Proposals (RFP) phase.

Interested parties will be required to demonstrate their technical capability, operational experience and financial capacity, as well as compliance with Transnet's requirements. Respondents will also be required to outline their approach to delivering sustainable socio-economic benefits and community upliftment through the project.

The initiative aims to overhaul how the nation's rich mineral wealth moves from the Northern Cape basin to global markets, and Transnet has packaged an investment envelope estimated between R30 billion and R44 billion, with the following components:

- An estimated R10 billion to R20 billion is required to addressing legacy maintenance backlogs, upgrading tracks, and securing the 1,100-kilometre corridor.
- Approximately R16 billion is allocated for the Design, Build, Finance, Operate, and Maintain (DBFOM) delivery of the greenfields Ngqura Manganese Export Terminal (NMET). The facility is planned with an initial handling capacity of approximately 14.7 million tonnes per annum (Mtpa), with built-in provisions to expand toward 16 Mtpa.
- Roughly R 4 billion is required for heavy-haul locomotives, wagon fleets, and integrated train operating systems.

The corridor itself targets an initial throughput baseline of approximately 12 Mtpa, scaling up to 16 Mtpa as market demand and subsequent asset optimisation permit.

By coordinating line capacity, rolling stock, and terminal infrastructure under a unified strategy, the project aims to significantly lift rail exports and consolidate fragmented export footprints into a streamlined, high-performance logistics chain.

A LONG HAUL

South Africa holds some of the largest and most sought-after manganese reserves globally, a critical metal heavily relied upon for steelmaking and advanced battery manufacturing. The majority of export manganese – about 80% – makes the long haul from the Northern to Eastern Cape.

Increases in manganese production and global demand, as well as decades of underinvestment, cable theft, signalling obsolescence, and locomotive shortages, have severely overloaded the system. Consequently, freight volumes that should move seamlessly by rail have routinely been diverted onto regional roads. This heavy road haulage has resulted in severe back-of-port congestion, accelerated road surface degradation, localised environmental and dust pollution, and inflated logistics expenses that erode the international competitiveness of South African mining houses.

KICK-STARTING A STALLED PROJECT

Despite years of discussion, Transnet has been reluctant and unable to risk investing in a new manganese export terminal at Ngqura. Through the RFQ structure, Transnet demonstrates an understanding of how to manage the required investment risk.

Two distinct, ring-fenced Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) are in place. This mechanism is engineered to isolate operational variables from asset upkeep risks, thereby maximising project bankability for commercial lenders and institutional investors.

- SPV1 (terminal and rail operations) oversees terminal development, cargo handling, customer contracting, and rail haulage operations. Transnet will retain a strategic 51% majority shareholding in SPV1, while the chosen private sector consortium will hold the remaining 49% through a holding company. This vehicle carries the commercial, market demand, and operational performance risks.
- SPV2 (infrastructure maintenance) is wholly owned by the private consortium's holding company; SPV2 is tasked with the heavy-lifting rehabilitation, renewal, and continuous lifecycle maintenance of the rail corridor. Rather than depending directly on volatile freight volumes, SPV2 will operate under an availability-based compensation model governed by the Transnet Rail Infrastructure Manager (TRIM), ensuring reliable payouts tied directly to strict asset availability and network performance standards.

Denise van Huyssteen, CEO of the Nelson Mandela Bay Business Chamber, said it is encouraging that the RFQ aligns with Transnet's overall strategy for handling public sector partnerships across the various nodes. "Lessons learnt from other corridors and terminals such as Durban and Richards Bay should be incorporated into the project to minimise risks and to achieve a successful outcome," she said.

CATALYST

Van Huyssteen expressed hope that the initiative serves as a catalyst for finally relocating manganese from the Port of Port Elizabeth to the Port of Ngqura. "It should also address some of the substantial challenges experienced with storage of manganese in areas such as Markman."

"Additionally, the project should play an instrumental role in getting a significant portion of the manganese transported via rail instead of by trucks. This in turn should alleviate the current pressure on roads and other infrastructure, which was not designed to deal with this type of commodity and its impact," she said, highlighting how the project could benefit the Bay.

The rehabilitation of the corridor from Hotazel, through Kimberley and De Aar to Ngqura, and the modernisation of port assets in the Nelson Mandela Bay metro will not serve manganese miners exclusively. While the capital layout is anchored in bulk mineral exports, the underlying mechanics of fixing a core national freight corridor yield wide-reaching multi-sector benefits.

"This should provide opportunity for the automotive sector and general containers to be transported between both locations, thus increasing the viability of the corridor. This is vital to lay the foundation for more vessels to call at the ports at Port Elizabeth and Ngqura, which in turn would benefit the broader base of export and import businesses which are located in the Bay," said Van Huyssteen.

Summerstrand hotel unveils a grand new look

CITY Lodge Hotels has completed a full refurbishment of Courtyard Hotel Gqeberha, the latest in a series of property upgrades the company has rolled out over the past few years as it continues to reinvest in its portfolio of 56 hotels.

The refurbishment marks the next step in the evolution of this four-star seafront hotel, bringing a design-led elegance that strengthens its appeal to business, leisure and bleisure travellers. Work began in July 2025 and wrapped up in April 2026, followed by a couple of months of snagging, all overseen by the hotel's general manager, Erich Oberhauser.

Located along the coastline with spectacular views across Algoa Bay, and with Shark Rock Pier forming part of its distinctive seaside outlook, the hotel's new look is built around the colours of the landscape, particularly those moments when the setting sun turns the horizon into shades of pink and coral against a deep blue sky.

The redesign of the hotel, restaurant, 91 rooms comprising 80 studios and 11 one-bedroom suites, conferencing rooms and a boardroom, draws on the property's beachfront setting. Coral accents bring warmth, custom rugs in deep blue and sandy tones ground the rooms, and rich timber finishes add another layer of comfort, creating calm, cocooning spaces.

"Today's guest seeks an experience that feels individual, immersive and connected to its surroundings," explains Louise Nogueira Dracopoulos of Oniro Studios, the group's interior designer. "Rather than interpreting the ocean literally, these colours and contrasts became the foundation for the interior palette."

Entering the hotel, guests are welcomed through the lobby beneath stylised, marine-inspired ceiling murals, with the eye drawn straight through to a large arched window framing the ocean beyond. The reception area has been redesigned to feel welcoming rather than formal, while a new co-working lounge, anchored by a fireplace and lined with timber shelving, offers guests a quieter alternative to a conventional business centre. The hotel kept ship models that have been part of the hotel for many years and gave them a new home within the shelving, tying the property's history to its new maritime-inspired interior.

The sunken lounge and newly created bar form the social heart of the ground floor, positioned to make the most of the hotel's ocean outlook. Custom hand-painted murals by artist Nikhil Tricam, created on tiled panels and inspired by maritime history, old ships and nautical elements, tie back to the ship models on display in the co-working lounge.

Port of East London targets a modest LNG terminal

TRANSNET National Ports Authority (TNPA) added to its Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) ambitions by issuing a Request for Proposals to appoint a terminal operator for a small-to-medium-scale LNG terminal at the Port of East London.

The successful bidder is expected to design, finance, develop, construct, operate, maintain and transfer the terminal back to the state-owned port authority after a 25-year concession period. Associated operational and safety systems form part of the project's scope.

The terminal will be developed on a greenfield site of approximately 8,900 sqm located within the port's West Bank precinct.

TNPA said the development is underpinned by demonstrated market interest and growing regional demand for natural gas. "Through its Expression of Interest process, TNPA received strong market response from potential operators, demonstrating market confidence in the LNG infrastructure at the Port of East London.

"The terminal is expected to provide a reliable energy solution for niche LNG consumers and industrial users in the Eastern Cape, while reinforcing the port's role in enabling industrial growth and sustainable economic development.

"The project is also expected to drive much-needed job creation in the Eastern Cape, generating both direct and indirect employment opportunities," TNPA said in a media statement.

East London port manager, Dr Sphiwe Mthembu, said, "This initiative represents a significant milestone in unlocking new investment opportunities within the port, further advancing its long-term growth and development objectives. The LNG terminal is expected to attract private sector investment, support the development of strategic energy infrastructure, and strengthen the port's role as a catalyst for economic growth in the region. By creating an enabling environment for new industries and emerging trade opportunities, we are positioning the port to respond to evolving market needs while contributing to regional competitiveness and sustainable development."

Earlier this year, TNPA signed a 25-year Terminal Operator Agreement with Ukwanda LNG (a JV between Tamasa Energy and the Strategic Fuel Fund) to construct an onshore LNG import and regasification facility paired with a dedicated TNPA-built berth at the Port of Ngqura. The project has an estimated investment value of R22 billion and is aiming for full operationalisation by 2035.

In May 2024, at the Port of Richards Bay, TNPA selected a consortium comprising Vopak Terminal Durban and Transnet Pipelines as the preferred bidder to develop the multi-million rand Zululand Energy Terminal (ZET) for LNG import and regasification.

Govt opens the door to private FMD vaccine manufacturers

THE Agricultural Research Council (ARC) and its Board have unanimously agreed to a proposal by the Minister of Agriculture, Willie Aucamp, to allow qualifying private companies to make use of the ARC's intellectual property (IP) regarding Foot and mouth disease (FMD) vaccines and for them to join in manufacturing the ARC's FMD vaccine at a large-scale.

According to the Department of Agriculture, the ARC vaccine is a very effective defence against the domestic FMD strains and requires only a single annual administration. However, due to manufacturing constraints, the ARC currently cannot manufacture its FMD vaccine at scale. Allowing local and/or international companies to manufacture the ARC vaccine under conditional IP licensing agreements with the ARC will therefore help the ARC overcome the current manufacturing constraints it is experiencing.

Following the board meeting, Minister Aucamp said: "Partnering with the private sector to manufacture the ARC vaccine marks a decisive breakthrough in safeguarding South Africa's livestock sector, strengthening national biosecurity, and securing food supply chains.

"I've listened to the concerns of farmers and other stakeholders in the sector, and I appreciate that they want swift action to deal with this Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak. It is against this background that we are now, for the first time, going to allow the private sector to make use of the IP of the ARC to enhance the availability of the ARC vaccine."

The ARC remains steadfastly committed to rebuilding its own internal production capacity, and while third-party assistance will be brought in to produce the ARC vaccine at large scale, the ARC will continue to expand its own FMD manufacturing capacity. Any income that the ARC will derive from these licensing agreements will be ringfenced by the ARC and will only be used by the ARC to increase its own FMD vaccine manufacturing capacity.

"Although the implementation of this decision will not happen overnight, it is a huge step forward in combating this FMD outbreak, and I am proud to confirm that all parties involved have committed to do whatever they can to ensure that this decision is implemented without delay," said Aucamp.

Further to this development, and at Minister Aucamp's request, the ARC will also submit representative FMD field-circulating virus isolates from South Africa to the Pirbright Institute in the United Kingdom in October for a second round of vaccine-matching assessments. This exercise will provide an additional scientific assessment of the suitability of available local and imported vaccines against FMD viruses currently circulating in South Africa.

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Hive brings in Spanish specialists for Coega green ammonia project

HIVE Hydrogen South Africa (HHSA) has awarded Técnicas Reunidas, a global engineering firm that specialises in designing and constructing large-scale clean fuels plants, the front-end engineering design (FEED) contract for its industrial-scale green hydrogen and ammonia production plant being developed in the Coega Special Economic Zone.

The project targets the production of approximately one million tonnes per annum of green ammonia and will use renewable electricity to produce green hydrogen, which will then be converted into green ammonia for domestic use and international export.

HHSA announced the contract award during the Africa Green Hydrogen Summit 2026 held in Cape Town from 15-16 September. In a press release, the company noted that Técnicas Reunidas was selected to carry out this project "after a long and in-depth period of world-leading EPC proposal evaluations", which took into account that the Spanish company "brings extensive international experience in the engineering and delivery of large-scale energy, hydrogen, ammonia and complex industrial process facilities".

The South African company also emphasised that "a key feature of Hive Hydrogen South Africa's project execution strategy is the intention for the successful ammonia production plant FEED contractor to roll over from FEED into the full Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) phase for the green ammonia production plant, subject to the successful completion of FEED, achievement of the required technical and commercial outcomes, project approvals, financing and Final Investment Decision". According to HHSA, the projected investment for the green ammonia production plant will reach $1.8 billion.

SCOPE OF WORK

Under the FEED contract, Técnicas Reunidas will carry out hydrogen production electrolysers, air separation units, and the green ammonia production loop; a desalination plant; storage systems with a capacity of over 100,000 metric tons; pipelines to the port of Ngqura; and auxiliary facilities.

Gonzalo Pardo, commercial director of services at Técnicas Reunidas, said, "We are delighted to have been selected by Hive for this world-leading decarbonisation project. Leveraging our deep technology expertise and end-to-end EPC vision, we look forward to delivering a successful FEED and contributing to Coega's role as a benchmark for Africa's sustainable industrial growth. Furthermore, this award is perfectly aligned with the strong focus on services projects that Técnicas Reunidas is currently implementing as part of its Salta strategic plan."

John Nutt, Hive's technical director, added, "Técnicas Reunidas' proposal was outstanding in all respects. We are looking forward to them adding significant value and improving further on the tremendous

work that has already gone into the development of the ammonia production plant to date, which will make it the most efficient, large-scale green hydrogen and green ammonia project. Our aim remains to produce the lowest-cost green ammonia globally."

Técnicas Reunidas has carried out more than 2,600 projects in over 70 countries during its 66-year history. The company is at the forefront of industrial decarbonisation and the circular economy, combining its engineering capabilities with a strong presence in shaping the value chains for hydrogen and its derivatives, sustainable fuels, and carbon management.

Técnicas Reunidas is headquartered in Spain and employs approximately 14,000 staff, most of whom are highly qualified engineers.

SA's green hydrogen commercialisation strategy moves ahead

AFRICA must increase its participation in the green hydrogen value chain over the next three years, according to the Deputy Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Dr Nomalungelo Gina ***(pictured)***.

She was speaking at the opening of the 2026 Africa Green Hydrogen Summit in Cape Town on 15 September 2026. Dr Gina said Africa's green hydrogen sector was entering a critical new phase, as projects move beyond feasibility studies and planning towards investment, implementation and large-scale deployment.

"Every major project should be viewed as an opportunity to develop local supply chains, technology capability, manufacturing and skills," she said during a Ministerial Plenary titled "Powering gigawatt-scale green hydrogen".

"From the perspective of the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, our focus is to ensure that this growth is accompanied by the development of technology capability, intellectual property, skills and local industrial capacity," she said.

South Africa has made significant investments in building these capabilities. Through Hydrogen South Africa, the country has developed expertise across the hydrogen and fuel-cell value chain, including catalysts, fuel cells, electrolysers, hydrogen storage, metal hydrides, compression and refuelling technologies.

This has resulted in the country filing hydrogen intellectual property in 14 countries, including South Africa, with approximately 70% linked to commercial products.

In addition, the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation says several catalyst products are already being sold to local and international customers, while work is underway with the Technology Innovation Agency towards establishing local manufacturing capacity.

"These examples demonstrate that the journey from research to market is possible. But they also show us that RDI alone is not enough," she said. "This is why collaboration between government, industry, academia, investors and international partners is so important," she added.

EASTERN CAPE STRATEGY

The Deputy Minister, alongside the Eastern Cape Premier Oscar Mabuyane ***(pictured)***, unveiled the Eastern Cape Green Hydrogen Strategy.

The strategy details how the Eastern Cape intends to leverage its renewable-energy and industrial advantages to attract investment, develop new industries, create jobs and strengthen its position in the emerging global green economy.

A partnership between the DSTI, Nelson Mandela University and the South African National Energy Development Institute, the strategy ultimately aims to use green hydrogen as a catalyst for industrialisation, economic growth and long-term regional competitiveness.

Premier Mabuyane said the strategy provided a roadmap to attract investment, deepen value chains, support localisation and skills development, and ensure that existing automotive, manufacturing and export industries remain competitive as global markets transition to lower-carbon production.

The Eastern Cape has more than 2.4 Gigawatts of renewable-energy projects operational or under construction and a renewable-energy pipeline exceeding 10 Gigawatts. The ports of Ngqura and East London, Coega SEZ and East London IDZ, together with an established automotive and manufacturing base, provide industrial and export infrastructure close to potential production sites.

Deputy Minister Gina said government must continue to create an enabling policy and institutional environment. Research institutions must increasingly understand and respond to market requirements.

HYDROGEN DEAL BOOK

The event saw the Minister of Electricity and Energy, Dr Kgosientsho Ramokgopa, announce the First Wave of South Africa's national green hydrogen and Power-to-X (PtX) projects and launch the inaugural Hydrogen Deal Book.

This marked a milestone in implementing the country's Green Hydrogen Commercialisation Strategy and developing a pipeline of investment-ready projects in South Africa.

Strengthened partnership to drive the region's exports

TWO Nelson Mandela Bay business representative bodies have entered into a collaborative agreement to help advance the region's exports, trade and investment.

The partnership brings together the Nelson Mandela Bay Business Chamber's Trade and Investment Desk and Exporters Eastern Cape's export-focused network to help businesses overcome export hurdles on the ground and position them to become more competitive, better equipped to access new markets, and better able to expand their contribution to the regional economy.

"Our mandates differ in that the Business Chamber undertakes strategic initiatives and interventions to drive for an enabling environment for its members, while alongside this, encouraging the retention and attraction of investment and employment in the Bay. Exporters EC in turn assists in growing exports out of the Eastern Cape, but together we have a shared goal of advancing the region's economy by supporting businesses to succeed. The Business Chamber is leading the way with the support they are providing to businesses in the Metro, and we are excited to partner with them through the MOU," said Exporters EC chairman, Quintin Levey.

Chamber chief executive officer Denise van Huyssteen said, ''This will be achieved through lobbying and advocacy efforts focused on critical logistics, tariffs, and other trade facilitation issues which impact upon the sustainability of exporters,''.

''The partnership will further provide a platform for the two organisations to share relevant industry intelligence and strengthen engagement with stakeholders responsible for trade facilitation and the broader export environment. For businesses seeking to access international markets, the ability to move goods efficiently, manage trade-related costs and navigate the export environment is critical to their competitiveness."

The partnership will provide a platform for the two organisations to identify and better understand these challenges, share relevant industry intelligence and strengthen engagement with stakeholders responsible for trade facilitation and the broader export environment.

"Through engagement and information sharing we want to promote and grow the Eastern Cape export market as well as our respective members who are exporters and emerging/prospective exporters," said Levey.

NMBBC is representative of a broad spectrum of businesses in Nelson Mandela Bay. It is amongst the largest organised business structures in the Eastern Cape with a membership of approximately 700 businesses.

From left Quintin Levey (Chairperson of Exporters Eastern Cape), Suzanne Loubser (Operations Manager of Exporters Eastern Cape), Kelvin Naidoo (President of the Nelson Mandela Bay Business Chamber) and Denise van Huyssteen (Chief Executive Officer of the Nelson Mandela Bay Business Chamber) are pictured during the signing of the MOU.

Internship program builds Eastern Cape skills pipeline

A WORKPLACE-based learning programme providing young people with practical industry experience is currently underway in the Eastern Cape. It is a collaborative venture between the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (merSETA), and the Automotive Industry Development Centre Eastern Cape (AIDC-EC).

According to the two organisations, the latest intake comprises 50 participants, including 25 TVET Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) learners and 25 unemployed graduates. The participants commenced their workplace placements on 9 September 2026, gaining practical exposure across various participating companies within the automotive and manufacturing sectors.

PLACEMENTS

The programme provides participating interns with an opportunity to transition from theoretical learning into practical workplace environments. Through placements with various participating companies within the industry, interns will gain exposure to real-world operations, workplace processes, technical environments and professional standards relevant to their respective fields.

This industry-based approach is intended to ensure that young people are exposed to authentic workplace environments while simultaneously supporting companies with access to emerging talent that can contribute to the sector's future skills requirements.

The partnership between the merSETA and AIDC-EC is formalised through a Memorandum of Agreement that runs until 30 September 2028, providing a framework for continued collaboration between the two parties in support of workplace-based learning and industry skills development.

Speaking on the importance of strengthening the connection between skills development and industry, the merSETA acting chief executive officer, Naphtaly Mokgotsane, emphasised the need to create meaningful pathways for young people to transition from learning into the workplace:

"We must continue to strengthen the link between education, skills development and industry. Through partnerships such as this, we are creating opportunities for young people to gain practical workplace experience while building the skills that industry needs to grow and remain competitive."

merSETA ACEO, Naphtaly Mokgotsane

He said partnerships between skills development institutions and industry are essential to ensuring that young people are given meaningful opportunities to apply their knowledge, develop practical competencies and prepare themselves for the world of work.

EVOLVING TECHNOLOGIES

The programme is particularly significant within an industry that continues to evolve in response to technological advancement, changing production processes, automation, new energy technologies and the increasing demand for specialised skills.

Providing young people with workplace exposure is therefore not only about improving individual employment prospects, but also about ensuring that the sector has access to a pipeline of talent equipped to respond to its current and future skills requirements.

The internship placements will allow beneficiaries to apply their existing knowledge in practical settings, develop workplace competencies, learn from experienced professionals and build an understanding of the operational requirements of their respective industries.

PARTICIPATION

By bringing together skills development expertise and industry participation, the merSETA and AIDC-EC partnership seeks to ensure that workplace-based learning remains responsive to the current and future needs of the sector.

As the 50 participants progress through their respective workplace placements, merSETA and AIDC-EC will continue working with participating industry stakeholders to support the successful implementation of the programme and maximise the value of the workplace learning experience.

A practical approach to industrial decarbonisation for African industry

By Thava Govender, CEO: Engineering, Babcock

OPINION | ACROSS Africa's industrial sector, conversations around decarbonisation are becoming more urgent. While environmental targets and regulatory requirements continue to evolve, most plant managers and operations teams face a more immediate challenge: reducing emissions while maintaining production, reliability and profitability.

One of the biggest misconceptions we encounter is that decarbonisation requires major capital investment and wholesale plant replacement. In reality, some of the most impactful projects are targeted engineering interventions that improve efficiency, reduce emissions and extend asset life simultaneously.

Many industrial facilities still rely on equipment commissioned decades ago. These assets remain critical to production, but they were designed in a very different operating environment. Today, organisations face increasing pressure to improve efficiency, reduce emissions and remain competitive while maximising the value of existing infrastructure.

For African industry, the challenge is particularly complex. Operators must balance sustainability objectives with ageing infrastructure, constrained capital budgets and the need to maintain production in highly competitive markets. In this environment, practical solutions often deliver greater value than large-scale transformation programmes.

Across the power generation, petrochemical, pulp and paper, sugar and manufacturing sectors, we are seeing a clear shift in customer priorities. Five years ago, environmental discussions were largely compliance-driven. Today, customers want to know how emissions abatement projects can improve operational performance, reduce energy consumption and strengthen competitiveness.

"TODAY, CUSTOMERS WANT TO KNOW HOW EMISSIONS ABATEMENT PROJECTS CAN IMPROVE OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE, REDUCE ENERGY CONSUMPTION AND STRENGTHEN COMPETITIVENESS."

This shift reflects a growing understanding that decarbonisation is not simply an environmental initiative. When approached correctly, it can become a business improvement strategy that delivers benefits across multiple areas of an operation.

Engineering plays a critical role in making this possible.

Combustion optimisation, burner upgrades, emissions abatement technologies and plant efficiency improvements are all helping industrial operators achieve meaningful environmental gains. Importantly, organisations do not have to choose between environmental performance and operational efficiency. In many cases, the same engineering interventions that reduce emissions can also improve combustion efficiency, lower fuel consumption and enhance plant reliability.

Recent projects undertaken by Babcock demonstrate the value of this approach. At a major South African petrochemical facility, the company implemented a low-NOx burner upgrade programme that significantly reduced emissions while maintaining operational requirements. By combining advanced combustion technology with engineering expertise, the project delivered measurable environmental improvements alongside operational benefits.

Projects such as these highlight an important reality: industrial decarbonisation is rarely achieved through a single breakthrough technology. Instead, success typically comes from a combination of engineering expertise, process optimisation, targeted upgrades and a deep understanding of how individual facilities operate.

Similarly, emissions control and boiler optimisation projects across the energy and industrial sectors continue to demonstrate that meaningful improvements can often be achieved within existing infrastructure. Rather than replacing critical assets, organisations are increasingly pursuing targeted upgrades that improve performance, extend equipment life and support long-term sustainability objectives.

As industries continue to balance environmental obligations with commercial realities, engineering partners will play an increasingly important role in identifying practical pathways to decarbonisation. The focus must remain on solutions that are technically sound, economically viable and capable of delivering measurable outcomes.

Babcock supports customers across the energy, petrochemical, manufacturing, pulp and paper, sugar and mining sectors with a range of engineering solutions, including combustion optimisation, emissions abatement technologies, boiler upgrades, lifecycle maintenance and plant performance improvement programmes. Our approach is centred on helping customers achieve measurable environmental and operational improvements while maximising the value of their existing assets.

The future of industrial decarbonisation will not be defined by a single technology or a single project. Thousands of practical decisions will shape it by improving efficiency, reducing waste and optimising performance. For African industry, that represents more than an environmental opportunity. It is an opportunity to strengthen competitiveness, improve operational resilience and build more sustainable businesses for the future.

Solar buyouts and performance turnarounds are rising in South African C&I

By Anja Visagie, Chief Growth and Marketing Officer, Sustainable Power Solutions (SPS)

OPINION | SOUTH Africa's Commercial and Industrial (C&I) sectors have moved decisively past the initial phase of solar awareness. For years, businesses asked whether renewable energy made financial sense. Today, they understand the core benefits: lower electricity costs, improved sustainability performance, and long-term operational resilience. The focus has shifted from exploration to execution.

However, as the first major wave of legacy installations matures, a significant and costly challenge is emerging across the South African market: asset underperformance. Many early adopters are finding that their solar systems fail to deliver the savings and energy output originally expected. Whether due to insufficient maintenance, inadequate cleaning, limited performance oversight, equipment faults, or a lack of continuous monitoring, what once looked like a straightforward investment has often become a source of operational frustration.

Faced with shifting electricity tariffs and growing operational demands, businesses are discovering that managing maintenance schedules, monitoring system performance, tracking equipment warranties, and coordinating multiple service providers consumes valuable internal time and resources. Rather than delivering hassle-free savings, these systems have introduced a layer of operational complexity that many organisations are not equipped to manage internally.

THE ROOT OF UNDERPERFORMANCE

One of the most common causes of solar underperformance is surprisingly simple: poor maintenance. Because solar systems have few moving parts and are often installed out of sight on rooftops, many businesses assume they require minimal attention once commissioned. In reality, solar plants require regular cleaning, performance monitoring, and preventative maintenance to operate optimally.

The problem is particularly prevalent among early adopters who purchased systems outright and assigned maintenance responsibilities to internal technical teams. In many cases, these employees already have full-time responsibilities and lack the specialised expertise

or capacity needed to proactively manage solar assets. As a result, performance issues often go unnoticed until significant savings have already been lost.

Dirty panels, faulty components, inverter issues, and other minor defects may not stop a solar plant from operating altogether, but they can gradually reduce energy production over time. Without proper monitoring systems, businesses may only realise months later that their solar investment has been underperforming.

Compounding these technical challenges is fragmented accountability, which frequently leaves businesses caught in the middle of disputes between original installers, component manufacturers, and independent service providers.

This operational burden is particularly heavy for businesses that opted for an upfront Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) capital-purchase model. While this structure offers high theoretical returns, it also places the long-term responsibility for maintenance, performance, and operational management directly on the company.

THE CASE FOR ASSET BUYOUTS

To address this challenge, a growing number of South African enterprises are turning to solar asset buyouts and performance recovery programmes. Specialist operators are now stepping in to acquire underperforming legacy plants, taking over complete operational, technical, and contractual responsibility for the system.

Through an asset buyout, a specialised energy partner purchases the physical infrastructure from the business, often at or near the original purchase value depending on the condition and performance of the asset, effectively injecting capital back into the client's operations. The existing setup is then transitioned into a funded energy model, such as a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) or a structured lease.

Under this structure, the business pays only for the energy the system produces or a fixed monthly rental fee, while the specialist operator assumes ownership and operational responsibility.

This allows organisations to focus on their core business while transferring the responsibility for maintaining and optimising the solar asset to a specialist provider.

The model also reduces performance risk for the client. Because the customer pays only for the electricity produced, the energy provider is incentivised to ensure the system operates as efficiently as possible.

ENGINEERING THE TURNAROUND

Restoring an underperforming asset to peak efficiency requires an integrated engineering approach. Specialised operators deploy targeted optimisation programmes designed to improve system performance and maximise energy yield.

Securing real value from an underperforming solar plant depends on choosing a partner with a proven track record, strong technical expertise and sufficient financial backing. Because commercial solar systems are designed to operate for decades, businesses should seek a provider with the long-term stability required to support the asset throughout its lifecycle.

Cleaning service providers adapting to complex compliance frameworks

COMPLIANCE continues to shape how the cleaning and hygiene sector operates, and the market is increasingly demanding adherence to international standards. Red Alert notes that this trend is increasing among larger, often multinational clients who expect the same governance and risk management in their service providers as they apply internally.

The company says it has evolved its policy and procedural framework accordingly, extending beyond quality management into environmental responsibility and occupational health and safety, with particular attention to how waste – both general and hazardous – is handled, segregated, and disposed of in line with regulatory requirements.

Operational technology is also changing how cleaning services are delivered and measured, the company notes. In response, Red Alert has adopted state-of-the-art software that integrates and simplifies day-to-day operations – from real-time task tracking and geolocation verification to biometric facial recognition for workforce attendance, fully integrated with payroll systems. This reduces the potential for error or irregularity in timekeeping while giving clients direct visibility into service delivery through their own reporting portals. This creates a level of transparency and accountability that reflects the sector's broader shift toward data-driven service models.

"Clients don't just want a clean site anymore – they want proof," says Jo-Anne Kruger, MD of cleaning at Red Alert. "They want to see the compliance, the reporting, the accountability behind the work. That shift has pushed us to invest in systems that give clients real visibility, not just an assurance that the job was done."

Waste diversion is also becoming a defined target rather than an aspiration. Municipal and national strategies in South Africa have set landfill diversion targets of around 55% by 2030, rising beyond 70% by 2035, as part of a broader shift toward circular-economy principles. Meeting these goals requires providers to manage hazardous and general waste streams distinctly and compliantly. This is an area where Red Alert continues to invest, alongside its exploration of AI-powered robotics for large-scale cleaning environments, positioning the industry to become more efficient, measurable, and responsive to client and regulatory demands.

Understanding explosion-proof vacuum systems

INDUSTRIAL environments with combustible dust, flammable gases, or explosive vapours require more than conventional cleaning equipment. Explosion-proof vacuum systems are specifically engineered to operate safely in these hazardous areas, helping businesses minimise ignition risks while maintaining clean, compliant workplaces, according to Goscor Cleaning Equipment,

Understanding ATEX compliance is essential when selecting industrial vacuum equipment, as it ensures the machine meets stringent safety standards for use in explosive atmospheres—protecting both people and operations in high-risk environments.

ATEX COMPLIANCE

ATEX is a set of European safety directives that govern equipment used in potentially explosive atmospheres, where flammable gases, vapours, or combustible dust may be present. Although ATEX is a European certification standard, it is widely recognised and specified across many South African industries where explosive atmospheres present a significant safety risk. Sectors such as mining, petrochemical processing, manufacturing, grain handling and chemical production often rely on ATEX-compliant equipment to meet stringent safety requirements, reduce the risk of ignition and protect both personnel and critical infrastructure.

An ATEX-certified vacuum is specifically designed and rigorously tested to eliminate potential ignition sources, such as sparks, excessive heat, and electrostatic discharge, making it safe for use in hazardous environments.

ATEX classification divides hazardous environments into zones based on the likelihood and duration of an explosive atmosphere.

Zone 0 / 20 – Explosive atmosphere is present continuously or for long periods

Zone 1 / 21 – Explosive atmosphere is likely during normal operation

Zone 2 / 22 – Explosive atmosphere is not likely, and if it occurs, it is short-lived

Understanding the correct zone classification is essential when selecting explosion-proof vacuum equipment, as it determines the required certification level.

EXPLOSION-PROOF VACUUM CLEANERS

An explosion-proof vacuum cleaner is an industrial cleaning system designed to safely collect combustible dust and hazardous materials without creating ignition risks. These systems are built with specialised safety engineering, including anti-static materials and spark-free components.

Typical applications include chemical processing facilities, pharmaceutical manufacturing plants, and food production environments with fine dust. Other suitable settings are mining and heavy industrial operations, grain handling facilities, cement plants, and industrial workshops that handle combustible materials.

Explosion-proof vacuum systems are purpose-built to deliver powerful cleaning performance while maintaining the highest levels of safety in hazardous industrial environments. Their specialised design combines advanced safety technologies with robust industrial performance, making them ideal for operations with combustible dust or flammable substances.

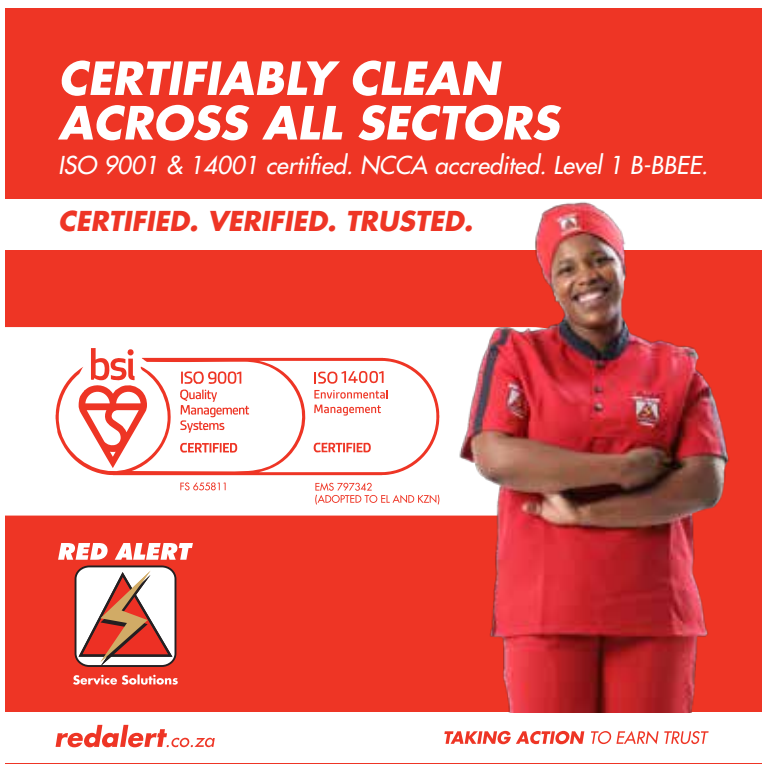
To minimise ignition risk in explosive atmospheres, these vacuum systems use anti-static construction materials to prevent electrostatic build-up, along with explosion-proof motors and electrical components. They also feature grounding and bonding systems for safe operation, along with spark-free designs that reduce ignition risks.

Alongside enhanced safety, combustible dust vacuums are engineered for reliable, heavy-duty industrial cleaning by offering high-efficiency filtration systems for fine dust and hazardous particles, as well as continuous-duty operation for demanding applications. Furthermore, they feature heavy-duty construction built to withstand harsh industrial conditions and advanced dust containment systems that safely capture and retain combustible materials.

RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

Goscor Cleaning Equipment supplies industrial vacuum systems engineered for demanding environments where safety, reliability, and performance are essential. Backed by expert technical support, the range includes:

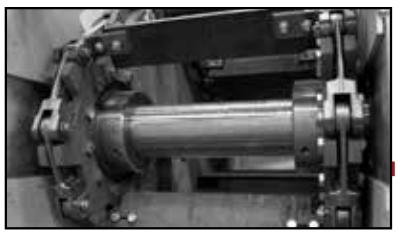
- Heavy-duty industrial vacuum systems
- Dust control and extraction solutions
- Professional guidance on selecting the right equipment
- Comprehensive servicing, maintenance, and after-sales support
- Designed for high-risk industrial dust extraction, these solutions deliver dependable cleaning performance without compromising on safety. The Delfin range of industrial vacuums ensures maximum operational safety.



Advanced materials enhance scraper chains' reliability

BMG's Power Transmission division recently launched a new generation of Fenner scraper chains, now manufactured from advanced, more durable materials to deliver the highest performance in the industry.

"These new Fenner scraper chain links are precision-engineered and forged from a high-performance alloy, representing a notable advancement in both strength and reliability," explains Leon Alberts, manager, Internal Operations, Mechanical Power Transmission Division, BMG. "Our new scraper chains, which are designed to withstand the toughest environments and handle the heaviest loads, offer several key advantages over the previous generation. Important benefits include enhanced load capacity, improved



impact and wear resistance and consistent performance in high temperature applications, as well as minimal downtime and extended service life.

"The new links maintain their integrity over longer cycles, significantly reducing replacement frequency and minimising downtime. Another advantage is that this chain is manufactured to tight tolerances, ensuring compatibility and trouble-free integration with an existing system.

"The transition from the previous-generation material been driven by our commitment to performance, advanced materials, the latest technologies and long-term value for our customers. This enhancement is not just an upgrade; it represents greater reliability for our customers."

Key features of the advanced Fenner scraper chain include higher operational stresses without deformation, delivering increased safety and high performance in demanding applications.

This range has been designed to absorb shock and resist cracking under dynamic loads, ensuring greater resilience in heavy-duty operations. The upgraded material offers excellent strength retention at elevated operating temperatures – a major advantage in continuous, high-friction environments.

Apprenticeship programme supports a skilled hand behind every machine tool

MACHINE tools are only as good as the people who operate them. As the Eastern Cape's manufacturing sector continues to invest in precision engineering capacity, the Production Technologies Association of South Africa (PtSA) is focused on a critical part of that equation — building the skilled workforce that keeps these machines running, says Bronwyn Daniels du Randt, manager: industry development, Eastern Cape.

This year again, PtSA celebrated a significant milestone with the successful graduation of another cohort from its PtSA Tool, Die and Mould making (TDM) Powered Apprenticeship Programme, demonstrating the continued growth and impact of the programme. Nine apprentices — Keenan Hendrick, Collen Mpofu, Blessings Phiri, Pheliswa Plaatjie, Oyama Patu, Lilitha Xobongo, Buhle Xosana, Nela Mpendulo, and Lucecin Cengeni — received their PtSA TDM Powered Apprenticeship Certificates after completing rigorous, hands-on training in Toolmaking and precision machining.

Daniels du Randt says the programme is designed to close the skills gap that has long challenged South Africa's Tool, Die and Mould-making industry, an industry that underpins everything from automotive components to consumer plastics manufacturing. Every stamped, moulded or pressed part begins on a Toolmaker's bench — and every toolmaker begins with training on the machine tools that make precision manufacturing possible.

“What sets this cohort apart is not just their technical certification, but where they've landed: all nine graduates have secured employment with respected Eastern Cape manufacturers, including Autocast, Wins Engineering, Jendamark Automation, The Engineering HUB, and Robbie Deyzel CNC. These placements demonstrate the real, tangible link between structured apprenticeship training and industry-ready talent — exactly the kind of skilled workforce the region's machine tool and manufacturing sector needs to remain globally competitive,” she says.

The PtSA TDM Apprenticeship Programme’s certification process ensures that graduate competency is comprehensively assessed and verified.

The Red Seal Trade Test therefore serves as the QCTO’s formal confirmation of competency rather than an additional hurdle after certification.

With a new intake already underway — the next cohort begins training on 1 October 2026 — PtSA continues to build the pipeline of Toolmakers who will operate, maintain, and advance the machine tools driving Eastern Cape manufacturing forward.

“Companies who would like to sponsor a candidate or who would like to train their own employees are welcome to contact us. There is no manufacturing without tooling and "the machines are only as good as the hands that run them," with real names and real outcomes,” says Daniels du Randt.

Managing inertia, loads and speed in modern linear motion systems

ROBOTICS and automation applications are continually advancing, so engineers increasingly need to specify linear motion systems that can handle heavier payloads at higher operating speeds without compromising precision, reliability or service life.

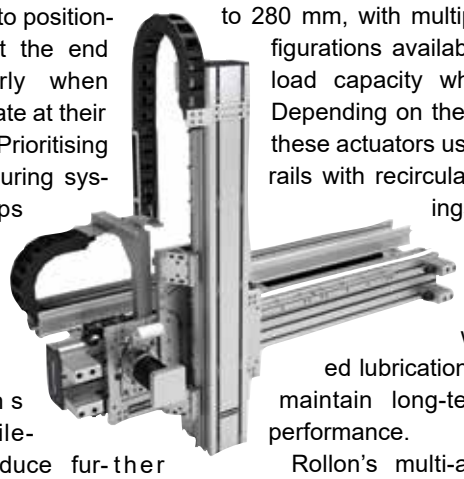
“Inertial forces, mechanical stress, deflection and cantilevered loads significantly affect performance, precision and service life in high-load, high-speed robotics and automation applications,” explains Leon Koekemoer, BMG’s linearway & ball screw product specialist. “Our team of specialists works closely with customers to ensure a thorough understanding of the relationship between load, speed and system dynamics when selecting linear motion solutions for demanding applications.

SUBSTANTIAL PAYLOADS

“One of the primary considerations is inertia. As payload mass increases, significantly greater forces are required to accelerate and decelerate moving assemblies. This relationship becomes even more important in applications that combine substantial payloads with high operating speeds, where the forces generated throughout the system increase accordingly.

“Heavy loads also place greater mechanical stress on critical machine components. Linear guides, rotary bearings, rack-and-pinion systems and couplings are all subjected to higher operating forces, which can reduce service life if the system has not been designed specifically for these demanding conditions. Selecting components with the necessary structural strength and durability therefore plays an important role in ensuring long-term reliability.”

Structural stiffness is another important consideration. Under dynamic loading, even small amounts of deflection can lead to positioning inaccuracies at the end effector, particularly when machine axes operate at their maximum reach. Prioritising actuator stiffness during system design helps minimise deflection and maintain positioning accuracy throughout the operating cycle.



Applications involving cantilevered loads introduce further design challenges. When a payload extends away from the centreline of an actuator or robot transfer unit, additional pitching moments are created.

These rotational forces place extra demands on support structures, linear bearings and drive systems, while also increasing bearing friction and structural deflection. The result can be reduced repeatability and linearity, particularly where large payloads are involved.

Rollon, specialists in the production and development of linear motion systems, recommends the selection of track-roller linear guides for dynamic applications because they combine high load capacity, stiffness and the ability to operate at elevated speeds and accelerations. Prismatic rail and other roller-based guide technologies are also suitable for harsh operating environments where contamination or aggressive conditions may be present.

For applications requiring complete actuator solutions, Rollon’s R-Smart and R-Smart-R belt-driven linear actuators are designed to transport heavy loads, while maintaining high operating performance. The self-supporting extruded aluminium structures are available in widths from 120 mm to 280 mm, with multiple slider configurations available to increase load capacity where required. Depending on the configuration, these actuators use either profile rails with recirculating ball bearings or hardened prismatic rails paired with track rollers, while integrated lubrication systems help maintain long-term operating performance.

Rollon’s multi-axis YZ PAR/PAS gantry systems, featuring self-supporting aluminium frames with high torsional rigidity and rack-and-pinion transmission, also meet the requirements of demanding automation applications. These robust systems can transport payloads of up to 2,000 kg over travel lengths of up to 12 m, while achieving operating speeds of up to 4 m/s in applications including pick-and-place systems, industrial machine tending and logistics.

Through BMG’s partnership with Rollon, the BMG team is able to supply and support advanced linear motion systems to meet growing demand in Africa for precision in industrial automation, ensuring sustainable production.

BMG’s Rollon portfolio includes linear guides, telescopic rails, actuators and multi-axis systems, as well as ball screws and rotational units - engineered to function reliably in heavy-duty industrial operations.

These robust components withstand high loads, continuous use and exposure to harsh environments, making them suitable for sectors including automotive assembly, electronics manufacturing, packaging and materials handling.

CONCLUSION

Specifying linear motion systems for high-load, high-speed applications requires engineers to consider far more than payload capacity alone. Mechanical stress, structural deflection, cantilevered loading, inertia and overall system dynamics all influence performance, positioning accuracy and equipment life. By carefully balancing these factors and selecting appropriately engineered linear motion technologies, designers can achieve reliable, high-performance automation systems capable of meeting increasingly demanding production requirements.

SA imposes duties on certain steel from China

SOUTH African steel producers have successfully applied for anti-dumping measures to be imposed on steel imports. The International Trade Administration Commission of South Africa (ITAC) said that it had concluded its anti-dumping investigation into imports of certain corrosion-resistant steel coil originating from China. As a result, the South African Revenue Service (SARS) will impose definitive anti-dumping duties on 18 September 2026. According to ITAC, the investigation followed an application by ArcelorMittal South Africa and Safal Steel.

FROM 8,21 – 57,84% CORROSION-RESISTANT

ITAC said it found that the Chinese products were being dumped into the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) market, and that the dumped imports were causing material injury to the SACU industry. Corrosion-resistant steel coil is mainly used by re-rollers and fabricators in the manufacture of corrugated roof cladding.

After considering verified information and submissions from interested parties, ITAC determined final dumping margins of 8.21% for Shandong Guanxian Foryune Composite Materials Co., Ltd (Foryune) and 57.84% for all other Chinese exporters and producers.

Because safeguard duties already apply to the products, ITAC adopted an approach to avoid a double remedy. During the period in which the safeguard and anti-dumping measures overlap, only the portion of the anti-dumping duty exceeding the safeguard duty is payable. Consequently:

- Foryune: 0% anti-dumping duty in years 1 to 3, increasing to 8.21% in years 4 and 5.
- All other Chinese exporters and producers: 5.50% in year 1, 20.50% in year 2, 35.50% in year 3, and 57.84% in years 4 and 5.

ITAC said it also determined that rebate item 460.15/7210.61/01.06 should be extended to allow qualifying imports to receive a rebate of the anti-dumping duties.

“Overall, the measures are intended to address the material injury caused by dumped imports and restore fair competition in the SACU market, while ensuring that the simultaneous application of safeguard and anti-dumping measures does not result in a double remedy,” ITAC said in a media statement.

Welcome to the future of welding

EXCITEMENT and conviction were on full display when B.E.D. joined long-term partner Fronius SA to demonstrate the future of welding at Electra Mining Africa (EMA) 2026, held in Johannesburg in September.

"Every product and process at Fronius is driven by a clear focus on next-level quality, efficiency and reliability for long-term customer value," says Edric van der Walt, welding specialist at Fronius SA.

"Every process is carried out by a skilled person who takes ownership and pride in their work, highlighting Fronius’s deep investment in research, development and continuous innovation. This is certainly not a rebranded import product," Van der Walt emphasises.

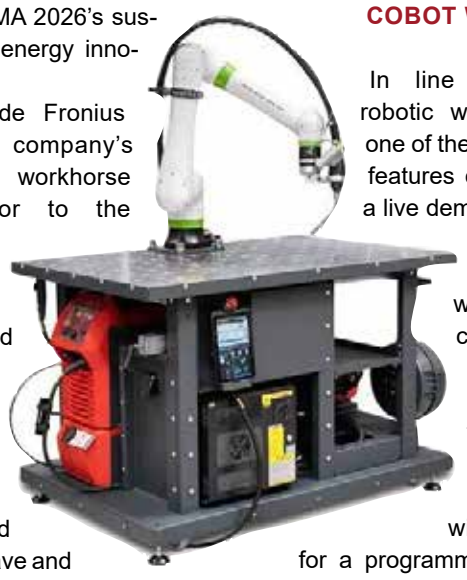
Fronius welding machines undergo rigorous testing, including IP rating, drop and vibration tests, before going to market, making them well suited to demanding conditions.

Van der Walt draws a distinction that resonates locally: "A lot of people say Fronius is the ‘Rolls Royce’ of welding: yes, in terms of exclusivity and top-of-range quality, that is true. But in terms of toughness, it is more like a Land Cruiser. It is built to last!" he says.

Jaco Booyens, Fronius welding specialist at Bolt and Engineering Distributors Group (B.E.D.), joined Van der Walt on the EMA stand. Booyens underwent intensive training at Fronius in Austria recently, and is a zealous Fronius product ambassador: "I am not here to sell you a welding machine," he tells every customer. "I am here to sell you the welding arc, and that is what I believe sets Fronius apart!"

The Fronius outdoor stand at EMA 2026 was designed around live welding demonstrations, with a structured daily demonstration schedule to keep the stand active and engaging throughout the show. Its next-generation, energy-efficient flagship products on display were perfectly aligned with EMA 2026’s sustainability and energy innovation theme.

These include Fronius Fortis, the company’s new industrial workhorse and successor to the TransSteel; the Fronius Ignis Battery, an improved cordless welding solution which enables welding anywhere, anytime; and the Fronius iWave and TPS/i flagship systems, demonstrating advanced features including the Velo system, which allows welders to weld long seams with ease. Van der Walt describes this system as "cruise control for welding". The Dynamic Wire system for TIG welding was also on show.



COBOT WELDING

In line with Fronius’s robotic welding offerings, one of the most anticipated features of the stand was a live demonstration of collaborative robot – or ‘cobot’ – welding. Unlike conventional industrial robots, a cobot can be taught by physically guiding it into position, without the need for a programming language or a pendant controller. It also works safely alongside human operators, stopping immediately on contact.

"I can see the South African market moving towards this kind of soft automation in the coming years," says Van der Walt. "The quality requirements are there, the cobot is continuously reliable, and for small-to-medium manufacturers doing production runs of 50 to 100 parts before changing over, this is an ideal solution."

Van der Walt said their participation at EMA 2026 provided visitors looking to improve welding quality, productivity, reliability and long-term operational efficiency with an opportunity to experience the future of welding technology. "EMA 2026 provided a unique opportunity to engage directly with welding and automation specialists, see live demonstrations, explore automated and robotic welding applications and understand how these solutions can be tailored to your specific operational requirements."

Booyens said that, after EMA 2026, B.E.D. - with its nationwide network of branches and extensive welding expertise – is open to doing demonstrations at customers’ premises. It will be life-changing for their welding efficiency and productivity!" he concludes.

Competitive pricing and global expertise secure a long-term contract

SKF South Africa has secured a major three year tender with one of South Africa’s prominent steel manufacturers. According to SKF, the agreement, which took effect in July 2026 and runs until 2028, covers strategic product ranges, including SKF tapered roller bearings and metals specific bearings. The company says the deal underscores its ability to combine competitive local pricing with global product performance benchmarking, while maintaining close engagement with key decision-makers.

In line with the tender requirements, SKF will supply its New Generation E9 BT4 four row tapered roller bearings and VA9B1 metals specific bearings, both critical to caster and reduction mill applications.

SKF’s tapered roller bearings are engineered for durability and reliability, delivering a long service life even under extreme operating conditions. With increased dynamic load ratings of up to 23%, they handle high loads without compromising productivity or safety. Their optimised design ensures low friction torque, reduced noise and vibration and improved running accuracy at higher speeds. By combining advanced materials with precise heat treatment, these bearings achieve high fatigue life, enhanced contamination resistance and superior dimensional stability. “They can also be customised to meet specific requirements such as high speeds, heavy loads, contaminated environments, elevated temperatures or vibratory conditions, making them a versatile solution across demanding applications,” highlights Shailin Govender, SKF key account manager: Heavy Industries.

SKF’s spherical roller bearings for continuous casters are purpose built to withstand the unique challenges of the casting environment. Manufactured from superior high grade steel, they are designed to prevent unplanned downtime and catastrophic machinery failure. Their robust construction ensures reliable performance, while the cage design is specifically optimised for low speed rotation, delivering consistent efficiency in continuous casting machines. Together, these solutions highlight SKF’s commitment to providing the metals industry with bearings that combine resilience, precision, and long term operational reliability.

By isolating these ranges based on industry focus and sales history, SKF was able to deliver a cost competitive solution aligned with global metals guidelines. “Our ability to balance local competitiveness with global product excellence was a decisive factor in winning this contract,” says Govender, highlighting the strength of SKF’s integrated approach.

For the customer, the partnership addresses long standing challenges around procurement risks, unreliable deliveries and inventory duplication. SKF’s commitment to stocking predetermined quantities locally, reviewed annually to optimise costs, ensures reliable supply and reduced downtime. The inclusion of distributor 24/7 support and official SKF supply via on site inventory VMI further minimises planning disruptions and administrative burdens. “Reliability is everything in the metals industry. This contract gives our customer peace of mind that their operations will run without costly interruptions,” Govender adds.

The agreement builds on a customer relationship nurtured by Andre Weyers (previous SKF metals key account manager) over nearly four decades, with continued support from Mohcine Rakhami, customer experience manager - Southern Africa, Maher Khouaja. industry leader metals and Marjan Trstenjak, GKAM Primetals, senior industry and application engineer metals. “Their professional guidance has been instrumental in ensuring SKF’s inclusion in the South African metals industry,” says Govender.

Reverse-engineering a solution for scarce legacy industrial gearbox parts

IT is the reply no equipment manager wants to receive. Noticing that parts for their industrial gearboxes, like gear drives and tooth wheels, are running very low, they reach out to the original equipment manufacturer to order more.

Instead, the OEM informs them that the last parts have been sold. The queried models are no longer in production, and they don't have the tools anymore to produce the gearboxes or their parts.

Companies run industrial gearboxes for decades, during which vendors can leave, no longer support legacy units, and stop producing relevant parts.

What choices do the owners of those gearboxes have left? Is replacement their only option?

REVERSE-ENGINEERING LEGACY PARTS

WEG Africa's turbine workshop has an attractive alternative. It uses 3D scanning to reverse-engineer, document, and manufacture components for gearboxes, turbines, and compressors, expanding their lifespans.

"We frequently service equipment that outlasted its supplier's support lifespan," says Alastair Gerrard, executive of energy systems at WEG Africa. "This is a major issue with turbines and gearboxes. There has been a lot of vendor consolidation, and many brands are no longer available regionally, especially in terms of workshops and spare parts. But legacy equipment can run for decades, and there's no reason to replace it, until you can't get spares. That's why we established our reverse-engineering services."

WEG's workshop covers industrial gearboxes, turbines, and compressors. Its maintenance experts cover all major vendor brands. They conduct on-site inspections and repairs, produce detailed reports, and can conduct stripping and rebuilds on-site or at WEG's workshop in Johannesburg.

The workshop includes a reverse engineering service, using 3D scanning technologies such as the FARO ScanArm to scan parts with exceptional precision, then producing detailed schematics. Having the full weight of WEG behind it, the workshop also has access to local and international professionals and manufacturing sites.

"We've worked with machines where nobody has seen the plans in many years. We scan and replicate parts, produce 3D drawings for the owners, and tool their replacement. In some cases, we even improve the part for better performance and longevity. It's a massive relief for our customers, knowing they can keep a crucial gearbox going rather than taking the very expensive and disruptive replacement route."

EXTENDING THE LIFESPAN OF LEGACY GEARBOXES

This type of service is particularly attractive to mines, which use dozens of gearboxes on conveyors, crushers, mixers, compressors, cranes, and many other utilities. Well-maintained gearboxes can run for at least a decade, even longer.

But even the best-observed maintenance schedule cannot compensate for a missing part. Precision reverse-engineering fixes this issue and extends equipment lifespans. When the vendor has disappeared, and parts stockpiles have dried up, obsolescence is no longer the only option.

Introducing a new generator concept for wind power turbines

WIND turbines continue to grow in output and dimension, both onshore and offshore. At the same time, the energy debate has shifted towards security of supply and affordability. Against this backdrop, German drive specialist Flender presented a new generator concept under its wind energy brand, Winergy, at WindEnergy Hamburg. Winergy Genera is a validated generator design concept and a technology package from which solutions are configured for individual turbine projects.

“With Winergy Genera we are doing more with less,” said Tommy Rahbek Nielsen, president of Winergy. “We combine very low noise with high power density and improved reliability, while eliminating magnets and rare earth materials – even in high power turbine classes. That reduces material input and improves the economics of wind projects.”

The validated Genera design delivers power densities of up to 700 W/kg. This represents a 10 percent increase compared to previous versions and comparable competing products and is currently unmatched in the wind industry. Generator length is reduced by 25 percent compared with the previous generation, which allows the generator to fit into the nacelle and keeps transport by standard truck and container feasible for power classes above 10 MW. Because the concept does not require external cooling fans, it consumes no auxiliary power for cooling, which increases the turbine’s annual energy production.

Noise emissions are 6 dB(A) lower than in the previous generation, contributing to quieter turbine operation. Lower turbine generator noise levels give project developers more headroom at noise-sensitive sites and supports local acceptance.

Genera is based on a Double Fed Induction Generator (DFIG), is available across power classes, and does not depend on rare earth materials in any of them. The difference becomes relevant above 10 MW: in this range, alternative generator concepts typically rely on permanent magnets containing rare earths, whereas Genera does not. Rare earths are available in limited quantities and their mining and processing are concentrated in a few regions worldwide, which exposes turbine manufacturers to price volatility and supply risk. A generator design that does without them removes this dependency from the drivetrain.

Depending on project requirements, windings can be specified in either aluminium or copper. Copper remains in tight supply: the International Energy Agency projects a global supply deficit of around 25 percent by 2035, and copper prices reached record highs in early 2026. The option to specify aluminium gives turbine manufacturers a second route for a material that affects both project cost and delivery reliability.

“Winergy Genera shows that high performance and cost-efficiency are not contradictory,” added Jörg Sieber, vice president Wind Generators in Flender’s wind segment. “We are increasing power density, reducing noise and lowering material use – in one solution. That helps our customers improve the overall economics of their wind projects.”

Genera is designed to work with any gearbox and is particularly optimised in combination with the Winergy Revo system, Flender’s gearbox concept for wind turbines.

Advanced tensioning solutions for industrial applications

SPECIALISTS in the design and manufacture of screen, transmission and materials handling products, OST-Africa has developed an advanced range of tensioning elements, designed to meet the demands of mechanical power transmission – including maintaining correct tension on chains and belts – which is essential for efficient, reliable and long-lasting operation.

The company’s tensioning system incorporates arms, idler sprockets, chain riders and rollers, all built with powder metal or cast iron housings, fitted with heavy-duty cast arms that house rubber inserts. These components provide progressive, self-adjusting tensioning, absorbing vibration and shock loads, while maintaining consistent pressure in demanding operating conditions.

“Correct chain and belt tensioning is fundamental to system reliability. Our units are engineered to deliver maintenance-free operation, reducing downtime, while extending the service life of belts, chains, bearings and drive shafts.

By addressing vibration, noise and shock loading, our tensioners protect both equipment and operators,” explains Chantelle Scheepers, marketing manager of OST-Africa. “OST tensioners are suitable for safe and efficient use in a wide range of equipment. In conveyor belt scrapers, the self-adjusting design maintains continuous belt contact, improving cleaning efficiency and reducing material build-up that can damage belts.

“In cold storage plants, the low-temperature operating range prevents premature hardening of tensioning elements. In food processing facilities, stainless steel tensioners ensure compliance with stringent hygiene standards, while maintaining reliable tensioning. Our system ensures fewer production stoppages, reduced maintenance intervals and greater overall system availability.

“To meet growing market demand, we have expanded our TE series tensioners to provide targeted solutions for specific applications in many sectors, including mining, materials handling, food processing, manufacturing and general industry.”

The standard TE and TE-F models, with front-mount options, are designed for general use, particularly where installation requires additional flexibility. The TE-G unit is galvanised for outdoor or oily environments and uses an oil-resistant rubber mix to operate reliably between –30°C and +90°C.

The TE-W version, with a working range between 80°C and 120°C, is manufactured for safe use in high-temperature conditions and is marked with a white dot for easy identification.

Other models in the range have been developed to meet specialist needs. The TE-B unit is suited to long-length chain drives and can withstand operating temperature ranges from –40°C to +80°C.

The TE-S4 tensioner is produced in stainless steel for food and pharmaceutical industries, combining corrosion resistance with food-safe materials.

Correct pump specification is critical in dewatering projects

THE correct specification of dewatering pumps has become one of the most important factors influencing operational efficiency, safety and production continuity.

While pumps are often viewed as standalone pieces of equipment, successful dewatering requires a detailed understanding of site conditions, water characteristics, duty requirements and long-term operational objectives. Incorrectly specified equipment can lead to excessive energy consumption, reduced pump life, frequent breakdowns, production interruptions and significantly higher operating costs.

According to Jordan Marsh, managing director of Integrated Pump Technology, many dewatering challenges in mining operations can be traced to pumps selected based solely on flow rate requirements, without sufficient consideration of the broader application.

"Effective dewatering is about much more than moving water from one point to another," Marsh explains. "Every application has unique characteristics, and unless these are properly assessed, the selected pump may not deliver the required performance or reliability."

He explains that factors such as pumping distance, total dynamic head, solids content, water chemistry, seasonal fluctuations, power availability and installation conditions all need to be evaluated during the specification process.

"Two applications may require the same flow rate, but the actual pump solution could be completely different depending on the site conditions," he says. "This is why a detailed assessment is critical before any equipment is selected."

Marsh notes that as mining operations move deeper underground and surface mines become larger, dewatering systems are often required to operate over longer distances and against higher heads. These conditions place additional demands on pumping equipment and require careful consideration of pump design, motor sizing and overall system configuration.

The increasing focus on sustainability is also influencing pump selection decisions. Mines are under pressure to reduce energy consumption while maintaining production targets, making efficiency an important consideration during the specification phase.

"A correctly specified pump will not only deliver reliable performance but can also significantly reduce energy costs and maintenance requirements over its operational life," Marsh says.

Integrated Pump Technology works closely with mining customers to evaluate individual site requirements before recommending suitable dewatering solutions. The company supplies a range of Grindex electric submersible pumps and Godwin diesel-driven pumps designed for demanding mining applications across Africa.

Integrated Pump Technology's dewatering portfolio includes Grindex electric submersible pumps ranging from approximately 1 kW to more than 90 kW, covering drainage, sludge and slurry applications. Its Godwin diesel-driven pump range incorporates both automatic self-priming and high-head pump technologies with capacities capable of delivering flow rates from a few litres per second to several thousand cubic metres per hour, depending on the application. This breadth of offering allows the company to match equipment precisely to site conditions, pumping distances, head requirements and water characteristics.

Live demo shows advanced slurry pump in action

KSB Pumps and Valves hosted a unique live display of its latest slurry pump technology at Electra Mining Africa 2026, featuring a fully monitored and adjustable MDX pump circuit that operated at regular intervals throughout the event.

The demonstration showed how advanced monitoring and adjustment technologies can transform the way slurry pumps are operated and maintained using a live GIW MDX with KSB's proprietary SLYsight and RAMSL technology that provides the operator with live monitoring data and the ability to set the pump's liner parameters for optimum performance in the space of minutes, rather than hours it would take to perform the same setting on traditional slurry pumps.

According to KSB Pumps and Valves market area manager for mining, Jacques Pretorius, the heavyweight unit was brought to South Africa from GIW's operation in Grovetown, USA, in two 20-foot containers and operated using water containing small urethane cylinders to simulate slurry characteristics. This allowed visitors to see the pump operating through the transparent piping and hear the particles moving through the pump, while also viewing live data as the settings changed.

"We wanted to demonstrate to the sub-Saharan African mining industry what technology can achieve, how it can improve performance, as well as how it can prolong the lifespan and extend service intervals of pumps in the field. It was the first time that we showed our MDX slurry pump using RAMSL technology which enables quick adjustment of the suction liner to maintain the optimum clearance or 'nose gap' between the stationary liner and rotating impeller.

"This is critical to slurry pump performance, as wear can change

the gap between it and the impeller as it increases, which allows slurry to recirculate around the front of the impeller instead of moving efficiently through the pump. The result is usually reduced hydraulic efficiency and premature component failure.

"Slurry pumps operate in some of the most demanding environments in the minerals processing chain with abrasive and often highly variable slurries continuously attacking internal components, so wear is inevitable.

The challenge is to understand it, manage it and intervene before it develops into an unplanned failure," says Pretorius.

He explains that KSB's RAMSL technology provides an automated way of managing this critical clearance rather than a maintenance team having to undertake lengthy manual adjustments. Visitors could see the liner being moved towards the rotating impeller before the system brought the liner into contact with it and backed it off to establish the required nose gap. The adjustment can be made in small increments, allowing the pump to be set accurately for optimum operation.

"It takes people out of harm's way and makes the adjustment much quicker and simpler."

Pretorius continues that SLYsight complements RAMSL with its sensor-based monitoring technology which is designed to provide wear data on the inside of the slurry pump where various sensors monitor wear and other critical parameters at different points within the pump. The data can then be monitored to check the wear condition and monitor changes over time. This gives the operators a clear indication of the internal condition of the pump rather than waiting for regular inspections as is usually the case.

Keith Hedges, KSB Pumps and Valves sales manager for valves, says the largescale MDX display was complemented with the equally impressive KSB DN600 knife gate valve with pneumatic cylinder and a DN400 pinch valve which weighs approximately 500 kg and 300kg respectively. In slurry applications KSB's valve solutions provide precise and reliable flow controls to prevent damage and wear to expensive pipeline infrastructure and for reliable operation in tough slurry conditions.

Real-world training builds skill and confidence

FOR operators using high-pressure jetting and vacuum equipment, knowing how a machine works is only part of the job. They also need to use it safely and effectively when faced with blocked sewer lines, difficult stormwater drains or challenging site conditions. That's why Werner Pumps has expanded operator training beyond its factory, taking practical instruction directly to customer sites.

According to Lazarus Dikgale, certified trainer at Werner Pumps, the aim is to give operators experience in the conditions they encounter in their daily work.

"At the factory, we can demonstrate equipment operation in a controlled environment, but on site we are able to train operators in the exact conditions they face every day," he says.

"For example, instead of demonstrating sewer unblocking or stormwater drain cleaning in a training pool, we can work manhole to manhole. This helps operators gain confidence and develop the skills to operate the equipment safely and efficiently."

FROM PRE-START CHECKS TO PRACTICAL OPERATION

Each training visit begins before the equipment is switched on. Dikgale demonstrates a pre-inspection and site-specific risk assessment, then takes operators through the daily inspections and pre-start checks they should perform themselves.

Operators are taught correct operating procedures, preventative maintenance and equipment care, as

well as the dos and don'ts of using the unit.

Importantly, they do not simply watch – they participate. "The operators repeat every procedure themselves under supervision until they are confident and competent," says Dikgale.

The training then moves into practical work, depending on the equipment and application. This can include unblocking sewer lines, cleaning stormwater drainage systems and vacuum loading.

Operators are also shown how to wash and clean the unit correctly after use, an important step in preventative maintenance.

LEARNING IN REAL-WORLD CONDITIONS

Taking training into the field exposes operators to variables that cannot easily be recreated at a factory.

Different blockages, weather, dust and site-specific challenges all influence how equipment is used. Working through these conditions under supervision helps operators understand not only what to do, but how to respond when the job does not go as expected.

"Factory training is excellent for teaching theory and understanding the machine," says Dikgale. "On-site training combines that technical knowledge with real-life experience, resulting in operators who are more confident, capable and prepared for their daily work."

It also gives the trainer an opportunity to identify habits that may affect safety, productivity or the condition of the equipment.

One common issue is operators assuming that experience with an older machine means they can operate a newer one.

Werner Pumps equipment continues to evolve, with changes in technology and operating systems. Previous experience is useful, Dikgale says, but should not replace learning the correct procedures for the unit being used.

Consulting firm's breadth of expertise and young talent recognised

MAJOR wins at the 2026 SAICE National Awards, held at the NH Hotel in Sandton on 3 September, have continued Zutari's strong run of industry recognition. The consulting engineering firm was recognised across four categories, including three wins and a highly commended project recognition, highlighting the breadth of its technical expertise, project capability and investment in the next generation of engineering professionals.

The Senqu Bridge – Polihali project was named winner of the Technical Excellence International Project of the Year Award, while the Jwaneng Underground Mine Flood Risk Assessment won the Technical Excellence Investigative Project of the Year Award. Zutari's Sachin Ravjee, associate bridge engineer, was named Young Engineer of the Year.

The N2/R61 Emergency Slope Repairs project, undertaken for Sanral by Zutari / Rumdel / Wild Coast, was Highly Commended in the Technical Excellence Maintenance or Rehabilitation Project of the Year category.

The results follow Zutari's strong performance at the 2026 CESA Aon Engineering Excellence Awards on 20 August, where its projects and people were recognised across technical excellence, infrastructure impact, industry leadership and talent development.

They also further affirm Zutari's growing international standing. The firm recently climbed 31 places in the ENR Top 225 International Design Firms ranking, moving from #99 in 2025 to #68 in 2026, driven primarily by growth in international design-service revenue.

"Recognition across both the CESA Aon and SAICE awards demonstrates the consistency and depth of engineering excellence within Zutari," comments TC Ralebitso, Africa chief executive officer of Zutari. "Importantly, it also reflects the impact of our work across different sectors, geographies and generations, from complex infrastructure and climate resilience to the development of young engineers who will shape the profession in years to come."

RESILIENCE AND CONNECTIVITY

The Senqu Bridge forms part of Phase II of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project and is being delivered in the remote, high-altitude Lesotho Highlands. At 825 m, the bridge is the longest and highest bridge in Lesotho and the first extradosed bridge in both Lesotho and South Africa.

Once the Polihali Dam is impounded, sections of the existing A1 national road and river crossings will be submerged. The new bridge will therefore preserve vital connections for communities in and around

Mokhotlong and Mapholaneng, including access to schools, healthcare, employment, trade and Maseru.

The project combines engineering innovation with a clear social and economic purpose, providing a reliable crossing in an environment characterised by steep terrain, snow, ice, strong winds and extreme temperatures.

The N2/R61 Emergency Slope Repairs similarly demonstrate the role of engineering in strengthening infrastructure resilience. The project responded to catastrophic flood damage in the OR Tambo District Municipality in March 2023, when extensive slope failures, erosion, roadway collapse and drainage failures affected a critical transport corridor between Mthatha and Port St Johns. Zutari developed emergency repair solutions focused on protecting human life and restoring the route as quickly as possible.

The resulting works incorporated advanced slope stabilisation measures, including soil nailing, reinforced shotcrete systems, mechanically stabilised earth walls, groundwater management and large-scale erosion protection. The project also required the team to adapt designs and construction methodologies as unforeseen geological and groundwater conditions emerged, while maintaining traffic access and public safety.

TACKLING COMPLEX CHALLENGES

At Botswana's Jwaneng Mine, Zutari's award-winning flood risk assessment addressed a very different but equally complex challenge. Jwaneng, a cornerstone of Botswana's economy, faces flood risks associated with the Naledi River catchment, which covers more than 450 km², as well as rainfall falling directly on the mine site.

With the open pit expected to deplete currently accessible resources by 2034 and Debswana evaluating a transition to underground mining, understanding present and future flood risk has become increasingly important.

Zutari was appointed to undertake a site-wide Surface Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Stormwater Management Masterplan for both the existing mine layout and future development. The project required a system-level approach because the mine's relatively flat terrain, depression storages, pit and waste rock dump could not be adequately represented using conventional peak-flow and flow-path methodologies.

INVESTING IN THE PROFESSION

The recognition of Ravjee as SAICE Young Engineer of the Year adds an important people dimension to Zutari's awards success. Ravjee has progressed from graduate engineer to associate bridge engineer and professional engineer within eight years, contributing to major bridge and transport infrastructure projects across Southern Africa, Australia and the Middle East. His contribution to the Senqu Bridge has been complemented by a strong commitment to professional development and mentorship.

Since 2019, Ravjee has regularly served as an external examiner for final-year civil engineering projects at the University of Pretoria, while he currently leads Zutari's Bridge Team ECSA Focus Group, supporting approximately 20 candidate engineers. Since 2025, he has also served as vice-chairperson of the IABSE Structural Health Monitoring Task Group.

For Ralebitso, the recognition of both projects and people is central to what the awards represent.

Modernisation and lifecycle support demonstrated

AT Electra Mining Africa this September, SEW-EURODRIVE presented far more than products and equipment. Jonathan McKey, national sales and marketing manager, explains how the company has evolved into a strategic engineering partner helping customers modernise operations, improve reliability and optimise asset performance across the full lifecycle of their plants.

For SEW-EURODRIVE, the exhibition served as a platform to demonstrate how the business has expanded beyond traditional equipment supply to deliver integrated engineering solutions and long-term operational support.

According to McKey, the company's presence at the exhibition reflected a much broader shift taking place across industry.

"Customers are increasingly looking for partners who can support them beyond the initial equipment purchase," McKey says. "They want solutions that improve efficiency, reliability and productivity over the long term and they want access to the technical expertise that can help them achieve those outcomes."

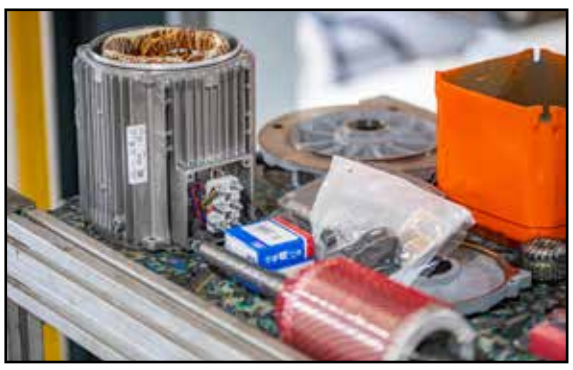
Across two exhibition stands – one in Hall 5 and the other in Hall 4 – SEW-EURODRIVE showcased how its engineering capabilities, digital technologies, service offering and industry expertise combine to support customers from installation and commissioning through to maintenance, optimisation and long-term asset management.

The company demonstrated how modern industrial operations require far more than individual products. Mining companies, manufacturers, logistics operators, ports, agricultural businesses and processing plants are all under pressure to increase productivity, reduce energy consumption and extend equipment life while maintaining operational reliability.

This has created growing demand for integrated solutions that address entire processes rather than individual components.

"Our objective is not simply to supply equipment," McKey says. "We want to help customers modernise their operations and improve the performance of their critical assets through the right combination of engineering, technology and service support."

This philosophy has driven SEW-



EURODRIVE's transition from a supplier of motors and gear units to a provider of complete drivetrain solutions supported by local manufacturing, engineering expertise, condition monitoring, maintenance services and long-term lifecycle support.

A CHANGING INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE

Across Africa, industrial operators are facing an increasingly complex operating environment. Rising energy costs, ageing infrastructure, growing sustainability requirements and pressure to improve productivity are forcing businesses to reassess how they manage their assets.

Many mining and industrial facilities still operate equipment installed decades ago. While these assets often remain functional, they may no longer deliver the efficiency, reliability or operating costs required in today's competitive environment.

At the same time, operations are under pressure to improve plant availability, reduce downtime and optimise energy consumption while extending the life of existing infrastructure.

According to McKey, these challenges require a different approach from suppliers. "Customers increasingly want to work with companies that understand their operations and can contribute to improving performance over the long term," he says. "The conversation has moved beyond individual products to discussions around reliability, efficiency, sustainability and asset performance."

This changing environment has created opportunities for companies capable of combining products, engineering expertise, digital technologies and service support into integrated solutions.

Industry expertise drove the conversation

At Electra Mining Africa, visitors to the SEW-EURODRIVE stands experienced an exhibition designed around industries rather than products and their lifecycles.

The company believes meaningful engagement begins with understanding the specific operating challenges faced by different sectors. Specialists from mining, materials handling, logistics, manufacturing, processing, agriculture and other industrial sectors were available throughout the exhibition.

"We deliberately created opportunities for industry-specific conversations," McKey says. "By understanding the unique challenges faced by each sector, we can develop solutions that deliver meaningful improvements in efficiency, reliability and sustainability."

This consultative approach allowed customers to discuss operational issues, maintenance challenges, expansion projects and future plans directly with specialists who understand their industries. Dedicated meeting areas also facilitated more detailed technical discussions and longer-term strategic conversations. The objective was not simply to showcase equipment but to help customers identify opportunities to improve the performance of their operations.

Good vessel management can reduce marine risk

COMMERCIAL vessel operators today face a demanding operating environment of rising repair costs, ageing fleets, increasingly unpredictable weather and tighter regulatory requirements, all contributing to higher operating costs and more complex marine risks.

According to Philip Cronje, business unit manager at Aon South Africa, these challenges are often amplified for South African operators. “Vessels operating along one of the world's busiest shipping routes frequently encounter harsh sea conditions around the Cape, while sourcing specialised replacement parts or securing dry dock availability can result in lengthy delays and expensive downtime.”

While many of these risks cannot be controlled, how well a vessel is maintained remains firmly within an owner's hands. Effective maintenance and technical management do far more than keep a vessel compliant. They improve reliability, reduce the likelihood of costly breakdowns and help protect both crew and cargo.

“Industry data continues to show that machinery failures and onboard fires remain among the leading causes of significant hull and machinery claims worldwide. These losses are often expensive, disruptive and, in many cases, preventable through disciplined maintenance and operational practices,” says Cronje.

MORE THAN SCHEDULED SERVICING

Good vessel management isn't simply about completing a maintenance checklist before the next survey. It requires a proactive approach that ensures equipment is operating as intended every day. Regular inspections, planned maintenance, prompt repairs and accurate record-keeping all contribute to identifying small issues before they develop into major failures.

Attention should also extend beyond the engine room. Electrical systems, fire detection equipment, navigation systems, steering gear, pumps and cargo handling equipment all require ongoing monitoring and preventative maintenance.

The best maintenance programme relies on experienced people to execute it consistently. “Senior officers and engineers play a critical role in maintaining vessel standards, identifying emerging problems and ensuring maintenance schedules are completed correctly. Creating an environment where crew members feel confident reporting defects or potential safety concerns is equally important, as many major incidents begin as relatively minor maintenance issues that were overlooked, deferred or not communicated effectively,” says Cronje.

Investing in crew training, clear maintenance procedures and a strong safety culture help reduce these risks while improving operational reliability.

EXPENSIVE PROBLEMS

Deferred maintenance is often viewed as a cost-saving measure during periods of financial pressure, but it is more likely to lead to higher costs later.

“Minor defects can quickly escalate into machinery failures that require extensive repairs, extended off-hire periods and potentially significant insurance claims,” Cronje explains.

“For South African operators, replacement parts are often imported, and repair facilities may not always be immediately available, which directly translates into a substantial financial impact during unplanned downtime. Preventative maintenance is almost always less expensive than emergency repairs,” Cronje adds.

Owners do not need complicated scorecards to improve maintenance performance. Simple measures can provide valuable insight, including:

- Completing planned maintenance on schedule.
- Tracking recurring equipment failures.
- Closing inspection findings promptly.
- Monitoring machinery condition.
- Reviewing safety observations and near-miss reports.

“Used consistently, these indicators help identify developing risks early and support continuous improvement across the fleet,” says Cronje.

Building smarter warehouse ecosystems

THE modern warehouse is undergoing a profound transformation. Once viewed primarily as a storage facility, today’s distribution centre has become a highly connected fulfilment hub where people, processes and technology work together to deliver greater speed, accuracy and customer responsiveness.

Driven by the rapid growth of e-commerce, changing consumer expectations and advances in automation, artificial intelligence (AI) and digital connectivity, warehouses are evolving into intelligent ecosystems designed to optimise every stage of material flow. For South African businesses, this evolution presents significant opportunities to improve operational efficiency while building greater resilience in increasingly competitive markets.

One of the biggest changes taking place in modern warehousing is a shift in focus from storage capacity to operational flow. “Warehouses are no longer simply being viewed as storage facilities,” explains Gavin Hall, managing director of Interroll South Africa. “They have become strategic fulfilment centres where everything is interconnected. Success is no longer about how much inventory you can store. It is about how efficiently products move through the entire ecosystem.”

This emphasis on flow efficiency reflects changing customer expectations. Consumers increasingly expect faster order fulfilment, same-day delivery and complete visibility throughout the purchasing journey. Meeting these expectations requires warehouses that can move products quickly, accurately and reliably through every stage of the operation.

For material handling providers, success is measured by three key outcomes. “Everything we do is focused on improving throughput, reducing operating costs and enhancing reliability,” says Hall. “When you get those three elements right, you are creating real value for customers.”

As warehouses become increasingly digital, connected technologies are providing operators with unprecedented visibility into every aspect of their operations. Internet of Things (IoT) devices, sensors and intelligent control systems now generate vast amounts of operational data, allowing businesses to monitor equipment performance, identify bottlenecks and optimise workflows in real time.

However, the challenge is no longer collecting information. It is making sense of it. “Successful organisations are those that can connect everything and then understand what the data is telling them,” says Hall. “Real-time visibility is incredibly valuable, but people cannot interpret thousands of data points every minute. That is where AI is becoming increasingly important.”

Rather than simply generating reports, AI is evolving into a practical decision-support tool that can analyse operational data and identify patterns that would otherwise remain hidden. “AI is moving beyond reporting and analytics towards active operational optimisation,” says Hall. “It helps transform complex information into practical decisions that improve performance.”

One of the most significant applications of connected technology is predictive maintenance. Instead of relying on fixed maintenance intervals, businesses can increasingly use operational data to determine exactly when equipment requires servicing.

“We can now schedule maintenance based on how customers actually use their systems,” adds Hall. “We know the parcel volumes, operating hours and utilisation levels, allowing maintenance to become much more precise.” This data-driven approach not only improves equipment reliability but also reduces unnecessary maintenance, minimises operational interruptions and extends equipment life.

Another defining characteristic of modern material handling systems is modularity. Rather than investing in entirely new infrastructure every time operational requirements change, businesses can build flexible systems that evolve alongside their operations.

From data to decisions: improving feed quality in real time

BÜHLER Southern Africa highlighted the benefits of precision feed milling at the Animal Feed Manufacturers Association's (AFMA) Conference 2026, held at Sun City in September. During a panel discussion, Oliver Brägger, sales manager, value nutrition, Bühler Group, explained how real-time data and automation can help feed manufacturers better manage raw material variability, optimise production, and improve feed quality.

Feed manufacturers must maintain consistent nutritional specifications even though the quality of key raw materials such as grain can vary. Changes in raw material quality affect nutritional composition, making it harder to maintain feed quality while managing costs. Precision feed milling offers a more proactive approach by combining real-time data with automated process control, enabling manufacturers to adjust to variability during production.

The AFM Forum's 2026 conference theme, 'The Feed Factor – The Chain That Feeds a Nation', highlighted the role of feed manufacturing in food security and the wider food value chain. As a critical link between agricultural production and animal protein, the feed industry plays an important role in maintaining the quality, consistency and efficiency of food production. The theme provided a relevant backdrop for discussions around how technology and data can help feed manufacturers respond to variability and strengthen performance across the value chain.

FROM MONITORING TO CONTROL

Bühler's precision feed milling approach uses real-time monitoring and inline analytics to provide feed manufacturers with continuous visibility into raw material information. This data can support automated formulation and recipe adjustment, rather than relying solely on fixed assumptions. "Precision feed milling is about moving from reacting to variability to actively managing it in real time," comments Brägger. "By turning data into actionable insights, manufacturers can make better decisions, improve feed consistency and maximise the value of available raw materials."

FEED SAFETY AND QUALITY

Bühler's precision feed milling approach also encompasses optical sorting technologies that help identify and remove mycotoxin-contaminated materials, supporting feed safety and quality assurance. This helps manufacturers manage contamination risks when raw-material quality varies, while maintaining nutritional requirements.

"Feed safety starts at the feed mill, where contaminated raw materials can be identified and removed before they enter the production process," says Brägger. More effective process control can help reduce energy consumption, while using available raw materials more effectively can support both economic and sustainability objectives.

EFFICIENCY

Efficiency is central to precision feed milling. Bühler's approach combines smart and precise equipment, advanced plant operation, sensor technology and operational data to provide greater visibility and control across the production process. Optimised algorithms can use this data to enable real-time optimisation, helping feed manufacturers respond to changing production conditions, improve resource efficiency and make more informed operational decisions.

Bühler's expertise includes precision feed milling and process optimisation, real-time monitoring, automated recipe control, optical sorting for mycotoxin removal and digitalised, data-driven production systems. Brägger discussed how these technologies translate into practical production benefits for feed manufacturers.

Spare parts available for lifting equipment, on time

LIFTING equipment such as cranes, hoists, winches, slings and their relevant components are all subject to wear and tear over time and parts failure due to lack of maintenance or incorrect usage. Sourcing genuine spare parts quickly is key to ensuring production and operational safety are not compromised.

"During the lifespan of lifting equipment, there is a vast number of fast-moving components that will need attention and/or replacement during the normal operational wear and tear process. Incorrect usage can also play a role in component breakdowns. Our local Konecranes Distribution Centre supplies guaranteed Konecranes spare parts in addition to replacement parts for all other makes and models of lifting equipment so that customers can have quick access to sourcing replacements or to maintain their own stock of needed spare parts," says Ian Grobler, sales manager, Konecranes South Africa.

REGULAR INSPECTIONS

"Worn components, if left to continue operating, can lead to safety consequences not only within the plant but for operators as well. Regular inspections of critical and essential performing parts ensure a safe and optimised equipment performance, which can enhance the equipment's lifespan and reduce downtime dramatically," says Grobler.

The stock holding of spare components at the Konecranes' Distribution Centre is sufficient to meet customer demand. Konecranes says its genuine parts may be a bit costlier than generic equivalents, but asserts they are the best choice to protect investments in Konecranes lifting equipment and offer higher engineering quality.

"With over 600,000 assets covered by service agreements, our knowledge of our customer's processes and environment allows us to provide recommendations for the establishment of a spare parts inventory. Thousands of 'fast moving parts' are stocked across all of our distribution centres. Our technicians are able to install any parts required as well as support any in-house maintenance via an inspection programme," comments Grobler.

Over the years, Konecranes has, through strategic acquisitions, acquired a number of brands that now fall under the Konecranes umbrella, making them a preferred OEM for replacement parts. Equivalent parts, either manufactured by Konecranes or sourced from suppliers other than the original manufacturer, are available and backed by Konecranes' warranty.

Additionally, Konecranes performance parts are engineered to perform in more arduous and demanding environments, offering customers improved crane durability and endurance in critical process applications.

Konecranes believes that customers should consider maintaining a healthy stock of parts that are subject to normal wear, so that replacements are quickly found when needed. In the event of an emergency, having spare components on hand can reduce costly downtime and eliminate delays while parts are then sourced.

"Keeping an eye on the performance of your crane's components – Konecranes or any other lifting equipment brand – is critical to keeping your crane's operation optimised. We believe that regular inspections and online loading of reports give the customer and the Konecranes technicians quick and easy access to the condition of a customer's lifting equipment. This also enables the customer to stock those components that have been identified as possibly needing replacement in the short to medium term," concludes Grobler.

Konecranes' extensive knowledge of crane components and maintenance enables its technicians to understand each brand's unique requirements and provide professional service in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations and industry best-practice codes.

2026/7 Features

Nov/Dec 2026
Ad Booking / Editorial
Deadline: 7 November

- Consulting Engineers & Project Management
- Education & Skills Development
- Electrical & Electronics
- Maritime & Ports
- Recycling & Waste Management
- Security

Jan/Feb 2027
Ad Booking / Editorial
Deadline: 10 January

- Automation & Robotics
- Engineering Supplies
- Facilities Management
- HVAC
- Industrial Property & Development
- Renewable Energy

Mar/Apr 2027
Ad Booking / Editorial
Deadline: 6 March

- Food & Beverage
- Hydraulics & Pneumatics
- Instrumentation, Measurement & Control
- Petrochemicals, Oil & Gas
- Pumps, Valves, Pipes & Fittings
- Transport & Logistics

May/Jun 2027
Ad Booking / Editorial
Deadline: 8 May

- Construction, Civil & Structural Engineering
- Energy & Power
- Packaging
- Supply Chain, Distribution & Warehousing
- Technology

July / August 2027
Ad Booking / Editorial
Deadline: 10 July

- Agriculture & Agro-processing
- Automotive Industry
- Chemical & Pharmaceuticals
- Materials Handling & Logistics
- Plastics & Rubber
- Water & Effluent Management

Sept/Oct 2027
Ad Booking / Editorial
Deadline: 4 September

- Green Industries
- Industrial Cleaning
- Machine Tools & Equipment
- Metals, Alloys and Fabrication
- Motors, Drives & Transmissions
- Pumps, Valves, Pipes & Fittings
- SHEQ Management

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Demand for dry-type transformers is growing

AS industries continue to prioritise safety, environmental responsibility, energy efficiency and operational reliability, dry-type transformers are increasingly replacing traditional oil-filled units across a diverse range of applications. From mining and mineral processing to manufacturing, commercial buildings, data centres, transport infrastructure and renewable energy projects, the technology is proving its value wherever dependable electrical power is essential.

According to David Claassen, managing director of Trafo Power Solutions, the growing adoption of dry-type transformers reflects a broader shift towards electrical infrastructure that delivers long-term performance while reducing operational and environmental risk.

“Customers today are evaluating electrical infrastructure far more strategically than they did in the past,” Claassen says. “They are looking beyond the initial purchase price to consider safety, reliability, maintenance requirements, environmental impact and total cost of ownership. Dry-type transformers offer significant advantages across all of these areas.”

Unlike conventional oil-filled transformers, dry-type units use air rather than insulating oil for cooling. This eliminates the risk of oil leaks and significantly reduces fire hazards, making them particularly well suited to indoor installations and environments where safety, environmental protection and equipment reliability are critical.

These advantages have driven increasing adoption across a wide range of industries. In mining and mineral processing, dry-type transformers provide safe, dependable power for underground operations, processing plants and mobile sub-

stations.

Manufacturing facilities benefit from their low maintenance requirements and ability to perform reliably in demanding industrial environments. Data centres value their high reliability and suitability for indoor installations where uninterrupted power supply is essential, while renewable energy projects increasingly incorporate dry-type technology into solar photovoltaic, battery energy storage and hybrid power systems.

“One of the greatest strengths of dry-type transformer technology is its versatility,” Claassen explains. “Whether it is supporting a remote mine, a modern manufacturing facility, a commercial development or a renewable energy installation, the technology delivers reliable performance while addressing increasingly important safety and environmental requirements.”

Because dry-type transformers eliminate insulating oil, they also reduce the risk of environmental contamination, supporting organisations’ sustainability objectives and simplifying environmental management. Their robust construction lets them perform reliably under challenging operating conditions while requiring relatively little routine maintenance, improving equipment availability and lowering lifecycle costs.

As industries continue investing in modern electrical infrastructure, Claassen believes the emphasis will increasingly shift towards engineered solutions designed around specific operating environments rather than standardised equipment.

“There is no single transformer solution that suits every application,” he says. “Each project has unique operating conditions, load profiles and environmental considerations. By understanding these requirements, we can engineer solutions that deliver reliable performance, maximise operational efficiency and provide long-term value throughout the life of the installation.”

With demand growing across multiple sectors, Trafo Power Solutions continues to support customers with application-specific dry-type transformer solutions.

Expanded lubricant range meets the demands of modern petrol engines

AS vehicle manufacturers improve engine efficiency through turbocharging, direct fuel injection and tighter emissions controls, the role of engine oil has evolved significantly. Modern lubricants are no longer simply designed to reduce wear. They are engineered to improve fuel economy, protect sophisticated emissions systems and address challenges such as Low-Speed Pre-Ignition (LSPI) in today’s high-performance petrol engines.

Recognising these changing requirements, Fuchs Lubricants South Africa has expanded its passenger vehicle lubricant portfolio by introducing Titan Syn SP SAE 0W-20 and Titan Syn SP-T SAE 10W-30, giving South African workshops and motorists access to lubricant technology developed for the latest generation of petrol engines.

Engine protection for today’s vehicles

With more Asian passenger vehicles entering the South African market, workshops and motorists are increasingly looking for lubricants that meet the latest international specifications while delivering dependable performance under local driving conditions.

Titan SYN SP SAE 0W-20 is formulated to meet the latest API SP Resource Conserving (RC) and ILSAC GF-6A specifications. Designed for naturally aspirated and turbocharged petrol engines, it provides excellent wear protection, promotes easier cold starts and reduces internal engine friction to help improve fuel efficiency. The advanced formulation also helps minimise sludge formation and reduce oil consumption, supporting long-term engine reliability.

Complementing the range is Titan SYN SP-T SAE 10W-30, developed for motorists and workshops seeking the latest engine oil technology with broad vehicle compatibility. Meeting the newest API SQ RC and ILSAC GF-7A performance standards, it delivers enhanced protection against Low-Speed Pre-Ignition (LSPI), a critical consideration for many modern turbocharged petrol engines. Its reduced SAPS formulation also helps protect exhaust after-treatment systems, contributing to improved emissions system durability throughout the oil’s service life.

“Vehicle technology is evolving at a rapid pace, and the lubricants used to protect those engines must evolve with it,” says Andrew Cowling, sales director at Fuchs Lubrications South Africa.

“Today’s workshops are servicing increasingly sophisticated petrol engines that demand the latest API and ILSAC performance standards. By expanding our Titan SYN range, we’re giving our customers access to globally developed lubricant technology that delivers the protection, efficiency and confidence needed to service their passenger vehicles.”

Precision lubrication can extend equipment life

AROUND 60 to 80 percent of bearing failures are lubricant-related, according to Lubrication Engineers (LE). One of the most effective ways to prevent these issues is to ensure proper lubrication. While under-lubricating a machine component can cause overheating, excessive wear and premature bearing failure, over-lubrication can be just as damaging. Getting the balance right and applying the right quantity of lubricant at the correct interval is essential for the correct functioning and longevity of mechanical equipment.

“Many people don’t know that over-lubricating is problematic, as it causes grease churning and overheating, which can eventually damage a machine's motor coils or windings,” says Gavin Ford, national marketing manager at LE South Africa. LE advises customers to use the minimum quantity lubrication (MQL) approach, applied at the correct interval, to protect equipment and minimise costs.

Getting the volume and timing of lubrication right also affects a plant's environmental footprint. Over-greasing wastes product and increases the amount of lubricant flung off moving components onto the surrounding floor and equipment. In contrast, correctly calculated application volumes reduce both waste and contamination risk.

REDUCING THE RISK OF CROSS-CONTAMINATION

LE supplies a range of products and solutions to make correct application easier and reduce the risk of lubrication cross-contamination. The Xport battery-powered grease gun is especially useful for lubricating hard-to-reach areas or equipment that needs frequent or large-scale lubrication.

“When the wrong grease is applied to a piece of equipment, the resulting issues can be expensive and time-consuming to fix,” says Ford. The grease gun has a clear grease tube, which allows maintenance teams to easily and accurately see what they are doing, and it eliminates cross-contamination.

The Xport has a 19.2-volt rechargeable battery, providing powerful, efficient grease delivery, and its extra-long whip hose conveniently reaches hard-to-access areas. The tubes are made of high-impact, fracture-resistant polycarbonate, capable of withstanding heavy use and high temperatures, and they fit many standard grease guns – making it easy and cost-effective to upgrade existing equipment.

For larger-scale applications, Ford recommends single-point lubrication systems. Single-point lubricators remove the uncertainty around greasing intervals and product volumes for each bearing, and ensure no lubrication point is missed during inspection. This makes it easier to catch bearing problems early, reduces unplanned maintenance and lowers overall maintenance costs, and cuts down on wasted lubricant and mess from manual over-application.

LE has a range of single-point lubricators that help maintenance teams simplify and improve their processes. “Our range of Xport Perma® single-point applicators are essentially micro-computer lubricators. They provide automated, precise and timed lubrication to be applied where needed, rather than maintenance teams having to do time-consuming manual lubricant application,” says Ford. The built-in RFID system helps customers track, monitor and fix lubrication-related issues during routine inspections, and the MQL schedule can easily calculate and manage the exact greasing quantity and re-greasing intervals for each bearing.

The Xport single-point lubricators run on battery or mains power and can be installed anywhere.