

MEC Dhlomo welcomes appointment of a 100% black-owned waste management consortium to service KZN hospitals and clinics; hails this as a shining example of radical economic transformation

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KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has congratulated a 100% Black-owned consortium that has been appointed to manage medical waste collection and disposal in the province.

MEC Dhlomo says the consortium - which is led by Buhle Waste, with Makhathini Medical Waste, who have roped in service providers Ecocycle and Microvulintuthuko – is one of the biggest and shining examples of Radical Economic Transformation.

The consortium replaces a single, white-owned monopolistic waste management company that had managed medical waste in the province for the past 20 years.

The appointed contractor Buhle Waste has entered into the JV with Makhathini Medical Waste too and are now trading as Buhle Waste Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Ecocycle, a non-burn treatment plant based in Pietermaritzburg, has been engaged to receive, treat and dispose of the waste; while the 100% women-led Micro VBE are providing logistics in support of waste collection.

Mr Bonginkosi Makhathini, whose Makhathini Medical Waste has a fleet of more than 100 bakkies, says: *"I am very happy to be part of this history in the making where Black companies have come together for a good cause, and to service the communities of KZN."*



MEC Dhlomo with members of the consortium Ms Mpume Mhlongo of Micro VBE, Mr Nkoko Sekete of Buhle Waste and Mr Bonginkosi Makhathini of Makhathini Medical Waste
CEO of Buhle Waste Dr David Sekete says: *"Our main objective is to ensure that the critical function of Health Care Risk Waste management services is executed with high standards of professionalism, compliance and operational excellence."*

He says that Buhle Waste services a wide range of customers. In the public sector - including this includes the SA National Blood Service, the National Health Laboratory Service, Departments of Health in Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and the Free State. In the private sector, they do work for, among others, the Nelson Mandela Children's Hospitals, RH Matjhabeng, private hospitals, old age homes, private medical practices and funeral homes.

Buhle Waste has a 21 year track record in the waste industry, owns 70 trucks in the fleet and employs 350 people nationwide. The company owns and operates 3 waste treatment plants (one incinerator and two non-burn technologies) based in Johannesburg and Polokwane.

"This extensive experience will be combined with, for instance, Makhathini Medical Waste, a strong new entrant which owns and operates a compliant waste transfer station as well as a fleet of 7 trucks and numerous bakkies."

Sekete says the consortium is excited at finally cracking it in a sector that has so far been virtually impenetrable for Black African business operators. He promises nothing but service excellence.

"Across the country there is an emergence of black African players in this specialised sector. However, KZN in particular has long been dominated by a single player. Some basic market-related reasons for this have included high barriers to entry due to the necessity for specialist expertise and the capital intensity of operations. Non-market related reasons include institutional inertia whereby procurement processes favour incumbents."

He says one of the strengths of the consortium is his company's impeccable record of on-time collection of waste and compliant disposal thereof.

"We track and monitor all waste containers through a sophisticated GPRS-enabled systems provided by our tech partner Technetium. In addition, we have deployed satellite tracking on all our vehicles. Finally, over and above our own treatment facilities, we have partnered with compliant and well-established treatment facilities. The end-to-end chain of responsibility remains documented, auditable and unbroken from cradle to grave. On-time collections are guaranteed by our trained staff utilising the latest software in route tracking and optimisation. Given the importance of correct handling of waste, we also provide Health and Welfare SETA accredited training for facility staff."

Sekete says change in the sector can only come from an old but very true adage from South Africa's Struggle history: "each one teach one".

"Emerging black business must continue to support each other and learn from each other if we are to succeed. This JV and the related partnerships offer a winning formula for the continued progress in having a diversity of players in the sector".

"Our promise is that Blackness will become the synonym for Excellence. We are ready to offer a service that is professional, reliable, safe and compliant but also one that is caring and considerate to the needs of the end user, who is at the forefront of delivering services to our nation's people. We will not let them down."

MEC Dhlomo met members of the consortium on Friday, and congratulated them.

"We welcome the hard work of the Department of Health in KZN that has gone towards finding a consortium that will deliver such a critically important programme of medical waste management, from the cradle to the grave," says the MEC.

"This has always previously been a monopoly of white companies. For the first time ever, we are seeing an entry into the market of Black companies. What is interesting about this new entry is that it's not just an individual, but a consortium of four Black companies, which is very important. When you have a set-up such as this one, you're unlikely to create a monopoly. It is also interesting to note that within this consortium, there is a partner who is 100% female Black-owned. That is something to be commended, for females to actually run such credible companies for over 15 years. We wish them well and hope that they will continue understanding that collaborations in such critical work is the way to go in building up their profile and the legacy that

is going to be credited to Black companies. I am really humbled by this Department of Health achieving this Radical Economic Transformation in the way that they did.”