

Australian toy innovator plans first South African toy fair

The Australian toy innovator, Ken Howard is planning the first international toy and game trade fair for the African continent for August 2013 at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC). The event is aimed at growing the local toy market and kick-starting a vibrant toy design and manufacturing industry in South Africa.



Joey Pather, COO of the CTICC, says, "Howard's innovative concept is great news for Cape Town and the country as a whole. With his vision and the support of local industry bodies and business organisations, we are hopeful that the event will evolve into a world-class showcase, on par with similar events held in the US and Europe."

Howard, who is said to be one of Australia's most-awarded individuals, gained fame when he developed a board game called Parliament to teach his children about his country's parliamentary processes. He has since developed more than 1000 products and is the creator of the MasterChef Australia board game. He regularly consults for companies, TV shows and advertising agencies around the world and often helps aspirant toymakers to get their ideas off the ground.

"A huge gap in South Africa"

Howard is in South Africa to meet with various role-players in order to establish a local toy design and manufacturing industry.

"I saw a huge gap in South Africa - and the rest of Africa - in that there was no local toy manufacturing capacity, with most toys sold on the continent being imported from China. I will be meeting with a number of industry bodies to find a way forward for the establishment of a robust local toy design and manufacturing industry, which may include a toy design academy, a toy factory and the toy and game trade fair being hosted at the CTICC."

Similar toy trade fairs in other parts of the world have proven to be successful - the Nuremberg Toy Fair, the largest in the world, sees more than 2 600 exhibitors from 64 countries exhibit over a million products, with 76 000 visitors from around the world attending the six-day trade fair and purchasing the latest in toys and games.

A local toy manufacturing industry poses significant benefits to the South African economy. According to the Toy Industry Association, the industry contributes \$80.9 billion to the US economy annually, supporting more than 500 000 American jobs. "Despite the recession, the global toy industry has grown by 300% over the past few years, so there is huge potential for South Africa in establishing its own toy manufacturing capabilities," explains Howard.

Impact on the local economy

Pather is optimistic about the event's impact on the local economy. "With the possible establishment of a local production capability, the impact on job creation, skills development and foreign investment could be huge. The trade fair will reportedly attract thousands of international toy buyers, trade representatives, exhibitors and inventors, providing a significant economic boost to the local economy. Our planned expansion project could not have come at a better time, as events of this calibre necessitate the need for additional exhibition space in the near future."

The event will be held over four days in August 2013, with the first three days dedicated to a trade fair and the last day open to the public.

For more, go to www.kenhoward.com.

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