



# PRO BONO AND HUMAN RIGHTS

News and insights

## HOMES FOR THE HOMELESS CLIFFE DEKKER HOFMEYR SECURES NEW HOMES FOR EVICTED RESIDENTS



On 11 August 2011, Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr's Christine Jesseman and Khaya Mantengu of the Pro Bono and Human Rights practice, consulted with the community representative of evicted residents (residents) of the Chris Hani informal settlement in Daveyton. The residents had been evicted by the local municipality without notice and without a court order, from land that they had been occupying.

In order to gather the necessary information and, more importantly, to fully appreciate the circumstances in which the residents found

themselves, Christine and Khaya visited the informal settlement in Daveyton and consulted with the residents on numerous occasions. The urgency of the matter was exacerbated by the residents' personal circumstances. Some of them used their minimal income to rent alternative accommodation, while others were fortunate to have relatives provide them with shelter within their own informal structures.

Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr's Pro Bono team pursued the matter with the necessary urgency and negotiated a settlement agreement with the local municipality. The local municipality agreed to relocate the residents to newly built structures within the informal settlement, at no cost to the residents. The local municipality agreed to timeously construct new structures that are fit for purpose, to consent to residents occupying the land and to provide the residents with access to basic services.



Gcobisa Sigwili joined Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr's Pro Bono and Human Rights practice in January 2012. This coincided with the commencement of construction on the residents' new homes, and on 4 February 2012 the residents and their families took occupation of their new homes. This was a truly fitting start to the New Year and another satisfactory outcome for Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr's Pro Bono and Human Rights practice.



**Christine Jesseman**  
Director  
Pro Bono and Human Rights



**Khaya Mantengu**  
Candidate Attorney  
Projects and Infrastructure



**Gcobisa Sigwili**  
Candidate Attorney  
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## SASLAW GAUTENG ADVICE OFFICE PILOT PROJECT DOING WELL THANKS TO PRO BONO HOURS

The South African Society for Labour Law (SASLAW) initiated their pilot project in Gauteng in February 2011. Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr's Employment practice spent 121 pro bono hours in the project's advice centre in the last year – more than any other law firm. Michael Yeates, a director in the Employment practice, spent 29 hours working in the SASLAW Advice Centre. Yeates says that every director and associate in the Employment practice at Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr has been involved in the Centre.

"The Advice Centre is excellent experience for a labour attorney who gets to see the other side of employment law. Advising employers is somewhat different to advising individuals and it can only lend itself to making one a better all-round labour lawyer," says Yeates.

Mabasa Sibanda said of his time in the SASLAW Advice Centre: My experience has been sobering because it has given me some insight (albeit minimal) into the extent of the disenfranchisement of people who come from the poor, marginalised sections of society.

To illustrate, I am currently acting for a Zimbabwean lady who obtained employment on a false identification document. This fact was only discovered by her employer when she fell pregnant and had to apply for UIF. Upon discovering this, her employer forced her to resign after threatening to have her arrested. At the arbitration, the commissioner was hostile towards her. Moreover, the commissioner missed the point of her submissions. In ordinary circumstances, a lay person would experience great difficulty in launching a review application of this nature. The Advice Centre has addressed this shortfall. The necessity of this was self-evident in the field of labour law which, because of its nature, often interacts with people who have little or no education.

"At Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr, we place an emphasis on rendering practical advice to clients. At the advice centre, this means empowering the people who seek advice with the information which will enable them to enforce their rights independently of the advice centre. I have found this most satisfying. The challenge is always to package the information in a manner which is accessible to the clients."

"I enjoy working with the various staff at the advice centre. The spirit of camaraderie among the attorneys from the different law firms also makes the experience more rewarding."

**Michael Yeates**  
Director  
Employment



**Mabasa Sibanda**  
Senior Associate  
Employment

