

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **UMHLANGA ROCKS LIGHTHOUSE MARKS 70 YEARS AS A BEACON OF SAFE NAVIGATION**

*[Cape Town, 25 November 2024]* – One of South Africa’s most recognisable sites, uMhlanga Rocks Lighthouse today celebrates its 70th anniversary. The Lighthouse was first lit by Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA) on the night of 25 November 1954.

The uMhlanga Rocks tower was built soon after the opening of nearby Cooper Lighthouse in Durban, which was commissioned on 31 July 1953. It took just four days and 19 hours to construct and was commissioned a year later. The original site for the uMhlanga Rocks Lighthouse was on the grounds of the Oyster Box Hotel. When 33 centimetres of rain fell in less than 24 hours in January 1953 and caused erosion close to the proposed site, the current location was chosen because it had a rock foundation.

Situated on the uMhlanga Promenade, approximately 15 kilometres from Durban Central, the 21-metre cylindrical concrete tower is painted white, with a red top and red lantern house. The rotating lens system produces three flashes every 20 seconds.

The lighthouse is automated and TNPA carries out scheduled maintenance. It is one of the two lighthouses built to replace the Bluff Lighthouse; Cooper Lighthouse is the other. Bluff Lighthouse was in operation from 1867 until 1940 and was demolished in 1941 to make way for the placement of heavy artillery guns for World War II.

Other lighthouses in KwaZulu-Natal are Cape Vidal (1985), Cooper (1953), Durnford (1916), Green Point (1905), Ifafa (1980), Jesser Point (1986), North Sand Bluff (1968), Port Shepstone (1906), Richards Bay (1979 original concrete structure, 2018 current structure) and Tugela (1972).

The National Ports Act, 2005 (Act No.12 of 2005) mandates TNPA to provide, operate and maintain lighthouses and other marine Aids to Navigation (AtoNs) to assist the navigation of vessels within commercial port limits and along the coast of South Africa. Lighthouses, beacons, and buoys are the most common types of visual AtoNs.

**-ENDS-**

## Photo Gallery:

1.



The beautiful uMhlanga Rocks Lighthouse, one of South Africa's most recognisable and photographed lighthouses. The rotating lens system produces three flashes every 20 seconds.

2.



A photo dated 1955 of uMhlanga Rocks Lighthouse in the foreground with the Oyster Box Hotel in the background. The hotel acted as custodian of the lighthouse for many years and would alert the maintenance teams when something was wrong.

This arrangement is no longer in place.

3.



The original site for the uMhlanga Rocks Lighthouse was in the grounds of the Oyster Box Hotel. When 33 centimetres of rain fell in less than 24 hours in January 1953 and caused erosion close to the proposed site, the current location was chosen instead

## More on Virtual AtoNs

Virtual AtoNs are new technology that uses digital signals to warn of dangers in specific locations, without the need for physical buoys or lighthouses. The digital signals are transmitted from Automatic Identification System (AIS) stations and are received by AIS units onboard vessels. Large vessels – such as container ships and passenger ships – are required to carry AIS in terms of International Maritime Organisation regulations, but smaller vessels are not. Therefore, visual marine AtoNs cannot be done away with. TNPA AtoNs conform to the standards set by the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA). South Africa, represented by TNPA, is a founder member of IALA.

## **About Transnet National Ports Authority**

Transnet National Ports Authority is responsible for the safe, effective, and efficient economic functioning of the national port system, which it manages in a landlord capacity. It provides port infrastructure and marine services at the eight commercial seaports in South Africa – Richards Bay, Durban, Saldanha, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, Mossel Bay and Ngqura. It operates within a legislative and regulatory environment and is governed by the National Ports Act (Act No. 12 of 2005).

For more information visit [www.transnetnationalportsauthority.net](http://www.transnetnationalportsauthority.net)

### **Issued on behalf of Transnet National Ports Authority by:**

Captain Sabelo Mdlalose

Executive Manager: Lighthouse and Navigational Systems

### **For media queries please contact:**

Tamsyn-Anne Atkinson

Email: [tamsyn-anne.atkinson@transnet.net](mailto:tamsyn-anne.atkinson@transnet.net)

Cell: 060 778 5577