**PRESS RELEASE**

MEMSA hosts inaugural Innovation Awards to showcase local OEMs

**28 April 2022:** The inaugural Innovation Awards, hosted by [Mining Equipment Manufacturers of South Africa (MEMSA)](https://memsa.org.za/) on Wednesday 6 April 2022, was a celebration of local excellence in technological development and manufacturing capability, according to CEO **Lehlohonolo Molloyi**. “A lot of decision-makers in procurement tend to consider international mining equipment as being superior, when the reality is that our own local Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) are on par with the major international players.”

The Innovation Awards 2022 not only showcased members’ innovative capabilities, but was also a platform to raise the profile of MEMSA itself. “Many of our members invest substantially in in-house R&D, but the long lead time to deliver a working prototype is often offset by international companies exploiting preferential interest rates and other benefits to import equipment at a substantially cheaper cost. These are some of the challenges that MEMSA has been addressing,” says Molloyi.

Not only do local OEMs have to compete directly with global manufacturers, but the latter also have access to significant funding from their parent companies, in addition to government support. This has a major impact on the investment that these companies can pump into R&D. “From that perspective, a local OEM might build a prototype, only to find its innovation stymied by technological advances imported from better funded and resourced global companies,” adds Molloyi. Nevertheless, South African manufacturers continue to leverage expertise and innovation to meets local challenges cost-effectively to offer solutions for local, continental, and global markets.

Thus, the Innovation Awards initiative was developed to make the local mining industry aware of the high level of innovation in local manufacture. The category winners were as follows:

* **Hard Rock Mining Equipment (the Navin Singh Award):** Hydro Power Equipment (HPE) for the development of the Isidingo Drill and Drill Guide
* **Soft Rock Mining Equipment:** Rham Equipment for the development of Battery Electric driven LHD, Dump Truck and Land Cruiser
* **Mining Infrastructure and Mineral Processing:** AZMET Technology & Projects for the AZMET Cyanide Removal Process (AZ-CRP®)
* **Safer and Healthier Mining:** Mine Support Products for the Rocnet Modular Safety Net
* **Improved Productivity:** Hydropower Systems for the HV212 EOD Hydrovessel
* **Emerging or Small Enterprise:** Gravitas Minerals for the Optima Classifier™

Through the competition process and recent engagements with members around safety and energy projects, exciting innovations are happening across the cluster’s membership. This includes the development of battery electric mining vehicles by members including Rham Equipment, Fermel (personnel carrier) and Battery Electric (diesel locomotive conversion); innovations in explosive casings (NXCO); the development of trackless mining machinery suitable for mechanised mining methods, with sophisticated safety mechanisms; innovative hydro powered equipment; and data sensing devices and systems for better safety and productivity.

While Covid-19 had a marked impact on the procurement appetite of the mining industry over the past two years, Molloyi says the fact that the end of the pandemic is now in sight, combined with resurgent commodity prices, has meant that the bulk of MEMSA members have full order books at present. The Innovation Awards 2022 winners will benefit from exposure at the 2022 Investing in African Mining Indaba from 9 to 12 May in Cape Town.

“I am happy to report that due to the upswing in commodity prices, there is now far more demand for mining equipment, which has resulted in increased revenues for listed entities as well as private companies,” says Molloyi. The upswing also resulted in renewed interest in the Innovation Awards 2022, for which the initial call for submissions was issued in November last year, but later extended to end February this year.

“I paid regular visits to our members to ascertain what they were achieving in terms of innovation, meaning we ultimately ended up with nine submissions from small to medium and large enterprises,” says Molloyi. The judging panel consisted of a range of mining and industrial experts.

MEMSA, launched in 2016 and housed at the Mandela Mining Precinct (MMP) in Johannesburg, aims to grow the local supply chain of capital equipment for the mining industry which, in turn, will accelerate job creation and import displacement, both major factors impacting on the industry’s competitiveness.

The cluster was first mooted by the Resource Capital Goods Development (RCGD) study by the then Department of Trade & Industry, which investigated the potential of mining’s backward linkages or supply chains. The 2015 Mining Phakisa added further impetus, with a successful application for Cluster Development funding paving the way to a fully functional organisation.

Its base in the Mandela Mining Precinct gives MEMSA ready access to key partners such as the Minerals Council of South Africa, the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), the Department of Trade and Industry and Competition (the dtic), and the South African Minerals’ Processing Equipment Cluster (SAMPEC).

The focus on capital equipment is critical to not only usher in a new age of mechanisation in the South African mining industry, but to prepare it for Industry 4.0 as digitisation is accelerated by the Internet of Things. MEMSA’s remit is to promote the local manufacture of goods based on local and global IP and innovation.

A qualified process metallurgist, Molloyi himself has over 30 years’ experience in the mining industry, including being an operations manager for various opencast operations and overseeing the maintenance and repair of Load Haul Dumper (LHD) fleets for underground mining. A founding member of MEMSA, his journey has now come full circle with him being CEO.

“My experience has meant that, from behind my desk, I have insight into the numerous challenges faced by our members. Our aim as MEMSA is to put local OEMs on the map, and the Innovation Awards is a bold step in this direction.” Molloyi reveals that a more general Manufacturing Awards is also being planned by MEMSA for later this year to assist in introducing members to the broader South African industrial and manufacturing sectors.

***Ends***

**The Navin Singh Award for Innovation in Hard Rock Mining**

**Navin Singh** worked in and contributed to the South African mining industry for 25 years. He obtained a degree in Physics and Applied Physics from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and a Master’s in Mining Engineering from the University of Witwatersrand. After joining South Deep Gold Mine in 1996 and rising to the position of Chief Rock Engineer, he followed his passion for research and innovation to work with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), and the Mine Health and Safety Council. In his capacity as Manager for Mining R&D at the CSIR in 2015, he established the Mandela Mining Precinct in partnership with the then Department of Science and Technology, and the Chamber of Mines (now Minerals Council of South Africa).

Navin’s energy, passion and vision were inexhaustible – and infectious. He invited MEMSA into the Mandela Mining Precinct (MMP) to ensure collaboration with the South African mining supply chain and provided guidance to the cluster as director. He was a fellow of the SAIMM and broadened his influence to soft rock mining as a director of Coaltech.

Navin engaged formally with MEMSA as a director, but he would also walk down the passage to the cluster’s offices to check in and swap ideas and updates. In this way he deliberately worked to build the family of co-workers he envisaged the precinct would be: A place where ideas would be freely exchanged and good relationships built, so that all who worked there would appreciate spending their time in the workplace.

Navin made his mark through the establishment of the MMP and its naming; through his passion and enthusiasm for the SAMERDI research programmes pushing the frontiers of hard rock mining technology; through his humanism in foregrounding safety; and by building a community of scientific collaboration in the precinct. The Technology Availability and Readiness Atlas, to be relaunched this year, was one of his pet projects. Navin bravely battled and survived throat cancer and went on to work at Ramjacktech and Anglo American. He passed away from Covid-19 in 2021.

Navin would have heartily approved of the MEMSA Innovation Awards. MEMSA is honoured to remember him through the Navin Singh Award for Innovation in Hard Rock mining. As we forge further in a changed world, we hope to remain inspired by Navin the person and the scientist.

**Notes to the editor**To download hi-res images for this release, please visit <http://media.ngage.co.za> and click on the MEMSA link to view the company’s press office.

**About MEMSA**Formally established in 2016, the Mining Equipment Manufacturers of South Africa (MEMSA) is an industry cluster organisation aimed at advocating for and promoting the interests of its members and the mining equipment manufacture industry in South Africa. MEMSA is housed in the Mandela Mining Precinct in the heart of Gauteng, South Africa’s primary mining equipment manufacturing region.

**MEMSA Contact**

Sue Breckenridge

Marketing & Communications Officer

Cell: +269 7697 4340

Email: [sue@memsa.org.za](mailto:sue@memsa.org.za)

Web: [www.memsa.org.za](http://www.memsa.org.za)

**Media Contact**Renay TandyNGAGE Public Relations Phone: (011) 867-7763Fax: 086 512 3352Cell: +27 83 661 8751Email: [renay@ngage.co.za](mailto:renay@ngage.co.za) Web: [www.ngage.co.za](http://www.ngage.co.za)

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