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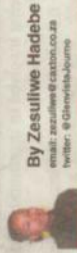
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## Clarity on Eskom's problems

### Switched on: Green Business Platform tackles Eskom blackouts controversy



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**F**EBRUARY started off on an inflammatory note with news of higher risk of more power cuts being implemented by Eskom, and a viral hoax of a two-week blackout.

These rumours were discussed at the Green Business Platform meeting held on February 6 at the Thaba Eco Hotel; a controversial topic not only for businesses but also every household that has been affected by the electricity crisis.

Hosts SOJO and KlipSA roped in one of the best people in the industry to provide clarity on the background to the current Eskom problems, issues such as the cost and time overruns at Medupi and Kusile, the resulting capacity shortages and the impact this has had on maintenance of Eskom's current generation fleet, and the distribution system maintenance backlog.

The guest speaker at the meeting was Chris Yelland, a fellow of the SAIEE, a senior member of the IEEE (USA) and a member of the IET (UK). He is also a registered Chartered Engineer with the Engineering Council in the UK.

The short, medium and long term solutions together with mitigation strategies for industrial, commercial and domestic electricity customers were also discussed. If you did not attend this meeting, then you definitely missed out.

Chris Yelland is no stranger to the phenomenon of load shedding, having experienced a power outage just as he was preparing his presentation on the power outlook in South Africa and what business and residents can do about it.

"Many of the problems that Eskom's power stations face revolve

around boiler tube leaks due to wear and tear. There's a lack of maintenance. The problems at an operational level are because of poor upkeep, there is no spare capacity or power reserves," explained Yelland.

According to him, there are deep structural issues at the power utility. Currently, Eskom is operating using an old structure, which has never been changed.

Many may remember on January 7 there was a breakdown of two of Eskom generators reportedly due

to a temporary loss of generating capacity, increasing the necessity for load shedding in the country. The collapse revealed the vulnerability of the constrained systems.

Yelland attributed Eskom's troubles to the failure to adequately run the power utility, which became apparent when Eskom's severe financial woes resulted in an urgent need for a financial bailout by the government.

"There's a lack of maintenance at distribution level, we lose ten times

more hours due to poor distribution," said Yelland.

He noted that political pressure may have been responsible for the government taking control of the engine room: "It is apparent that government is taking control of Eskom, stepping into the engine room of the failed utility. Crisis management has now moved to the Union Buildings in Pretoria, it's a war room."

Although with all the troubles the country is dealing with because of problems at Eskom, Yelland revealed

that there is hope yet for businesses and household consumers. Solutions can be found as means of backup supply through generators, solar gas or other alternative forms of energy and solar hot water geysers.

With renewable energy being one of the biggest programmes in South Africa, supported and owned by the private sector, their involvement could assist in Eskom's need to take on strategic equity as far as the power outlook in the next five years is concerned.



**POWER OUTLOOK:** KlipSA Chairman Andrew Barker, SOJO CEO Nicky Vakaloudis, Guest Speaker Chris Yelland and Chair of SOJO and Marketing Director of IProp Richard Bennet at the first Green Business Platform meeting of 2015.