

# Sekunjalo no sacred cow: Survé



By [Rod Baker](#)

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NEWSWATCH: Independent head Iqbal Survé says the group's editorial staff are assured of their editorial freedom, and need have no fear when writing about any company within the Sekunjalo Group, reports Mail & Guardian, which also reports the government has admitted - shock and horror - to making a mistake.



(image extracted from [Sanef website](#))

## For more:

- Mail & Guardian: [No journalist should fear writing about Sekunjalo, says Survé...](#) That's nice, because last Friday saw the wholly coincidental publishing of an article in the Cape Times on Sekunjalo and the Public Protector's very unflattering verdict on how well the fisheries minister is doing her job (not very well, to put it mildly, if Thuli Madonsela's findings are valid), and the newspaper's editor getting the chop.

At the time, Survé denied that former Cape Times editor Alide Dasnois was removed because of an editorial stance, and implied that she was [axed for not meeting financial targets](#). But as Siyabonga Mchunu and Drew Forrest ask so pertinently in Mail & Guardian, if not meeting targets and falling circulation are reasons to be fired/sacked/axed/removed/redeployed, [why has Survé singled out Dasnois?](#)

And then he goes on and compounds it by replacing her with an editor with, according to the Mail & Guardian report, an even worse record, namely Gasant Abarder, (who could also be in a spot of bother himself) after [allegedly absconding from Primedia](#).

In any event, as Anton Harber points out in his article today on Bizcommunity, if Survé is going to fire all the editors of his group's 18 newspapers that have shown significant declines in recent years, [at least 16 of them will go](#).

I cannot speak for any of the Independent's editors, but if I were one of them and if I believed the official explanation for Dasnois' removal, unless I am the editor of one of the only two of the group's publications *not* losing circulation, I'd be dusting off my CV - and in a hurry.

## OK, now you need to sit down...

Why? Because along with a comet in the heavens... Wait for it... wait for it... [the government has admitted that using the "interpreter" was a mistake](#). Mail & Guardian reports that "Using an interpreter not fully skilled in sign language at former president Nelson Mandela's [memorial service](#) was a mistake, Deputy Minister for people with Disabilities Minister Hendrietta Bogopane-Zulu said on Thursday.

Not "fully skilled"?! Come on! If the experts with SA's various organisations for the deaf can come out and essentially say that (self-confessed schizophrenic) Thamsanqa Jantjie is totally unskilled and what he was "signing" was utter gibberish, "not fully skilled" doesn't even begin to cover it. Apparently organisations for the deaf had raised concerns about the interpreter for some time - but it seems they were ignored.

Bogopane-Zulu is reported as saying that though a "mistake" did occur, "We can't be told we are embarrassed."

Oh yes, we **can**, and those involved should be embarrassed - enough to resign! What happened was a spectacular example of incompetence - and given his self-confessed mental condition - risky decision making, on the part of those who appointed him.

If ever there was a broadcast that went out to the world, this was it, and it was certainly not a time to "make a mistake". Sign language is a largely universal language, with, as I understand it, regional and local variations. According to [DeafSA](#), "South African Sign Language (SASL) is the primary language used by the Deaf community in South Africa. SASL was formally recognised in 1995, and is in the process of being codified. It is promoted as the language of various South African Deaf communities".

Clearly, what Jantjie was "signing" was closer to trying to swat an irritating fly than SASL, or *any* sign language for that matter.

The point is (and I am very willing to be corrected), an expert... **a real expert** (not a fake) in sign language... would be largely understood by a sign language reader wherever he or she might be. So a deaf person in the UK watching the memorial service, would understand at least the gist of what Obama and the other world leaders were saying. Right?

Thanks to Thamsanqa Jantjie and those who appointed him, they understood NOTHING!

So pardon the rant, but yes, we should be embarrassed.

## ABOUT ROD BAKER

Rod Baker is Content Director at Bizcommunity.com. A journalist since before computers, he worked on a wide range of magazines and, in his youth, rose through the ranks from being a lowly and abused sub-editor, to a high and still abused editor and publisher. He has been editor and publisher of a number of magazines, as well as a newspaper. He has edited many books, and written a number too. Email him at [rod@bizcommunity.com](mailto:rod@bizcommunity.com).

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