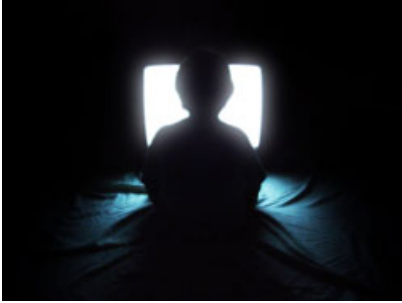


# Legal wrangle brewing over TV school in Bay

A Nelson Mandela Bay journalism and TV school has gone into battle with one of South Africa's production house giants, Urban Brew Studios, accusing it of backtracking on an agreement to train and develop local producers and filmmakers.



(Image: Aaron Escobar, via Wikimedia Commons)

The deal concluded between The Media Workshop and Urban Brew Studios at the end of 2013 would have benefited 90 emerging TV producers and filmmakers from around the Bay, who would be trained at local station Bay TV.

The programmes started in January last year and would have been finalised this month.

However, in court papers filed at the Port Elizabeth High Court, Denise Roodt of The Media Workshop claims that Urban Brew, which is behind some of South Africa's biggest television productions, backed away from the agreement in July, leaving the firm indebted.

She said Urban Brew was to be funded by the Media, Information and Communication Technologies Sector Education and Training Authority (MICT Seta) for the training programmes, and would in turn pay The Media Workshop on being invoiced.

## No longer interested

The Media Workshop would have received a total of just over R2.6m through the training initiative.

However, Roodt said that on 7 July last year she received a letter stating that Urban Brew was no longer interested in the initiative.

"As a result. the plaintiff has suffered damages in the sum of R1,331,063, being the difference between the plaintiff's quote accepted by the defendant and the amounts paid by the defendant to the plaintiff to date in terms of the said agreement," the court papers state.

The Media Workshop is also claiming interest on the amount and the costs of the case from the firm, which is behind productions like *Three Talk*, *Vodacom Millionaires* and *Lotto Live*, among others.

Roodt declined to comment on Wednesday.

However, in her affidavit submitted with court papers in support of summary judgment against Urban Brew, Roodt said she did not believe that the company had a bona fide defence to the relief sought.

## Dropouts

However, in an affidavit submitted by Urban Brew Studios, human resources manager Nokwanda Thabethe denied the firm had entered an appearance to defend the action solely for the purposes of delay.

"The defendant's obligations to pay the contract price to the plaintiff only became due and payable after the plaintiff performed its obligations in terms thereof," she said.

Thabethe said The Media Workshop was obliged to provide training from 15 January last year to 31 January this year but that some students had dropped out before July.

She said Urban Brew and The Media Workshop had agreed that students who dropped out would not be replaced and that the contract price would be reduced commensurately.

The Media Workshop had also failed to ensure that all the students would receive job training at Bay TV.

Thabethe said the students also did not appear to have reached the level of training they should have by the time indicated in the agreement.

Roodt said yesterday she did not know whether any of the trainees had ever completed the programme because in July, six months after it started, she was no longer involved with it.

In November, *The Herald* reported that allegations of missing money, board interference, inflated viewer numbers and poor quality continued to plague Bay TV.

At the time, Bay TV station manager Lungile Ndevu admitted there had been "teething problems" since Urban Brew withdrew some of its operational support.

Attempts to reach Bay TV management yesterday were unsuccessful.

Source: *The Herald*, via I-Net Bridge