

Harbour eatery all at sea

Panama Jacks - best known for serving delicious seafood dishes for almost three decades - has become an institution in Cape Town. But the eatery at the Table Bay Harbour has been given its marching orders by Transnet.



Manager Liat Pittaway said she had been told by Transnet that the business was not a "port-related activity and did not comply "with their idea of what business should be in the port."

The lease of 750m² of land from Transnet has been renewed since 1989 and now has a year to run.

A hit among locals, the restaurant also draws many tourists. "We are such a popular restaurant in Cape Town, we don't want to go. My first option is to stay exactly where we are because of our location," Pittaway said. She said people didn't just come for the food, they also visited the restaurant because of its location "We serve about 6,000 customers a month. It's good business, we serve the local people; we've got a local menu and we have got a specialised seafood menu; we also serve the local farm industry."

She said the financial implications would run into millions of rands.

Coen Birkenstock, corporate affairs manager based in the Port of Cape Town, confirmed that the restaurant had been told to move. "The restaurant owner has been offered the opportunity to relocate to an alternative site within the port. Panama Jacks may elect to remain within its present location until its current lease with TNPA expires on 31 March 2018, or may agree to the proposed relocation," he said.

He said the alternative site was located within the cruise terminal facility. Birkenstock said that position offered better infrastructure, greater public access and the opportunity to tap into business from the growing cruise tourism sector.

"The land presently occupied by Panama Jacks is situated within an area that is zoned for port industrial use. This presents ongoing operational challenges for the port," he said.

But Pittaway said she feared the new venue might not attract as much business.

"Customers may not like the new location and they might not support it. It's very frightening, it's a very great risk to take," she said.

Source: The Times

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