

The Eastern Cape's Weekend Post relaunched and repositioned

Weekend Post, the biggest selling weekend newspaper in the Eastern Cape, is to be relaunched and repositioned from Saturday afternoon to Saturday morning.

Issued by [Bay Public Relations](#) 17 Sep 2003

From September 20, the new Weekend Post, incorporating the Saturday edition of Port Elizabeth's morning newspaper, The Herald, will hit the streets early on Saturday mornings.

The Post will retain its successful mix of award-winning exclusives and hard news, but leisure and lifestyle content is being re-tuned to keep readers up to date with latest trends.

"Our research shows that our readers and advertisers want the Weekend Post to be published earlier on Saturdays," said Editor-in-chief of the Weekend Post and The Herald, Ric Wilson. "We have fine-tuned and expanded our vibrant mix of quality and pop, sport and leisure. "

The earlier Saturday distribution time means that retailers have an opportunity to reach readers before the weekend shopping is done. Launch promotions and competitions with over R250 000 in prizes, including 100 air tickets - will create more awareness of the change.

The Weekend Post will be marketed as the local sister newspaper of Johnnic Communications' brand leader, the Sunday Times. The national sales team of the Sunday Times will sell the product and special joint advertising packages will be offered for the Eastern Cape.

The Post currently publishes four editions and sells 32 000 copies from Saturday lunchtime through to Sunday evening. Although the Herald is the market leader in the PE region with daily sales of 32000, its Saturday edition traditionally sells 23 000 copies and will be incorporated with the new paper.

The new Weekend Post is expecting a circulation increase of 36 per cent taking into account the dual purchases of both papers. With the cover price remaining at R4,30, it is aiming for a sale of 45 000 with essentially the same distribution footprint. It will be available on Saturday morning in Port Elizabeth and country regions, East London and along the Garden Route in Plettenberg Bay, Knysna and George.

The "Border" edition of the paper, which contains local content, currently sells 3 500 copies in East London but is on sale only on Sunday morning. It is envisaged this number will increase with the paper's availability in East London on Saturday morning.

The repositioning of Weekend Post is in line with changing newspaper trends and will benefit both readers and advertisers. Ric Wilson, points out that the Weekend Post is the only Saturday afternoon paper left in South Africa.

"It makes it something of an anachronism, harking back to the days when there was little or no entertainment on Saturday. Now we have endless TV sport and shops that are open all day on Saturday," he said.

Weekend Post's current readership, according to Amps, is 70 per cent LSM 7 - 10, with 58 per cent white and 42 per cent blacks.

Wilson says: "We believe our relaunch will put us in a better position to broaden and grow our readership. Our research showed that black readers in particular felt the paper came out too late."

Apart from opening up new advertising opportunities, the new positioning means that the Weekend Post's popular Property Post - completely redesigned and rebranded as Weekend Property - and classified "Swops" columns will reach readers on Saturday morning.

"We are particularly pleased that almost all of the 9 000-odd subscribers to The Herald have accepted our offer to take the new Weekend Post on Saturday," says Johnnic Media's sales and marketing director for the Eastern Cape, Anthony Katz. "This means that, together with the unduplicated Weekend Post subscribers close to 10 000 households will be waking up to the Weekend Post on their doorsteps on 20 September."

Katz, who has been conducting briefing sessions for clients over the past two weeks, says advertisers are "thrilled at the potential this new offering opens up for them." Sales have been so successful that all the available advertising space in the first edition was sold out almost two weeks prior to its publication.

In addition to expanding the distribution of all its titles in the Eastern Cape, Johncom envisages publishing the fast-growing Sunday World in Port Elizabeth as well.

The new-look Weekend Post has been redesigned by former South African journalist Tony Sutton, who runs an international newspaper design consultancy based in Toronto. Sutton, who also designed the popular Sunday Times subscriber magazines, recently spent 10 days in PE with Wilson and his editorial team working on the Weekend Post.

The relaunch is being backed by an extensive marketing and promotional campaign, which also emphasises the unfolding opportunities in the Eastern Cape and uses the Weekend Post's new slogan Everyone's Champion.

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