CHAPTER 2
Blue as a Bruise, Winde as a Fart

"Some bruises you wear like badges of honour: when you got it playing rugby, or quad racing, or falling off something while drunk, no opportunity is lost to show off a good contusion.

A bruise inflicted by someone else, however, is a whole other story: it's like a big flashing arrow marking you out as punchable, and before long there'll be boys queuing up to add bruises of their own, as if they'd just been waiting for somebody to show them it could be done."

- Paul Murray

The central question is whether the spending of taxpayer's money requires oversight? It may seem to be the dumbest question of all time yet remains the most relevant.

In our beautiful, undeniably fucked up country, citizens complain in crescendos of whispers. About burst pipes, broken roads, electricity prices, preventable petrol increases, preventable fluctuations of our currency, and so many other things. Yet the overwhelming majority do nothing to stop the rotten element in our Government that's making us bankrupt.

It's like they're yelling, “Don't leave me out, come rob my house. I'll give you a beer if you break into a sweat carrying my shit. Wow, check at those muscles. You must work out a lot.”

I'm not like that.

This may be an exposé and an appeal to the President but it's also a conversation between you and me. I want you to understand why I felt compelled to become an activist, why the DA put me through hell. I know some of you, maybe most of you, are reading without accepting what I've got to say. But I'm stubborn so I'm trying anyway.

Realise that the DA isn't Jesus unless he's got that blue tinge you get when you drown. That's what will happen to us if we try walk on the watery promises of Western Cape politics.

Since my protest began, Knysna Tourism has illegally received approximately R34-million of taxpayers’ money. Its inception was 8 years before that, in 2000. Consequently, the final figure will be nearer R50-million. That private company, with politicians on its Board of Directors, was able to pay whichever contractors they favoured. They aren't the only town under the care of the DA doing that. Consequently, I expect the figure to rise exponentially.
The awkward fact for DA supporters is that their party's corruption will likely continue until their supposed enemy, the ANC, stops it. Yeah, I know how you feel.

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Section 67(1) of the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) states that:

"Before transferring funds of the municipality to an organisation or body outside any sphere of government otherwise than in compliance with a commercial or other business transaction, the accounting officer [Municipal Manager] must be satisfied that the organisation or body has the capacity and has agreed to to comply with any agreement with the municipality and comply with all reporting, financial management and auditing requirements as may be stipulated in the agreement, and that it implements effective, efficient and transparent financial management and internal control systems to guard against fraud, theft and financial mismanagement...”

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Knysna Tourism is a Section 21 company primarily funded via Public funds. For you to understand the crimes that followed, I need to get a bit technical. Stay with me because it’s possible this is happening in your town.

The name 'Knysna Tourism' is a misnomer, giving the appearance of an official government body when it’s actually a private company. The name should have been a brand belonging to the Municipality (which is the official representation of the Public). The Municipality should have either fulfilled its mandate directly or tendered the responsibility to a differently named company servicing the brand.

It’s important to make that distinction because people were confused, thinking that Knysna, a tourist based economy, couldn’t exist without Knysna Tourism. The town cannot exist without tourism but it can exist without the business deceptively named ‘Knysna Tourism’.

Knysna Tourism only existed through a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Knysna Municipality which paid it 4 to 6 million rand of taxpayers' money annually. That funding was delivered via grant-in-aid.

Note that ‘grant-in-aid’ refers to the transfer of municipal funds to organisations or bodies assisting the Municipality in the exercise of its powers as defined by the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA).

The MFMA applies wherever Public money goes. However, for years, Knysna Tourism
mostly operated without contracts or tenders with the majority of its suppliers. From an alleged R2-million surplus, the organisation ran into debt 4 years in a row. From 2010 to 2013, it was bailed out each time by the grant-in-aid despite it being illegal to fund debt with Public funds.

In 2013, an internal cash analysis showed monthly losses whilst an independent audit report stated that there was “significant doubt on the company’s ability to continue as a going concern.”

Problems were seemingly swept under the rug despite over R200,000 spent on legal fees against CEO Shaun van Eck who was found guilty of four charges of gross misconduct.

The independent disciplinary inquiry by Deseré Barnard included that:

"...The charges which Shaun van Eck has been found guilty of are serious in nature. Shaun was appointed in a very responsible position as CEO of Knysna Tourism. It is important to bear in mind, that 70% of Knysna Tourism’s budget is provided for by the Municipality and constitutes public money. The balance of the funding is provided by members contributions. Importantly the money which supports this organization is not Shaun’s own money...

I have already dealt with the fact that the majority of funding for KT constitutes public funding. There is simply no basis for Shaun to assume that he would have the authority to extend credit on behalf of this organization [to private companies]...

For a period of 13 months, because the organization could not complete a simple task such as arranging for proper signatures with the bank, Shaun ran the petty cash through his own account, on one occasion up to an amount R30,000...

The non-payment of creditors reflected badly on KT, and also on its major funder, the Knysna Municipality.

From the evidence, it appeared almost as if Shaun ran Knysna Tourism as his own business...

It is difficult to understand how Shaun could make a decision to send an employee on an expensive trip to Jamaica even if Shaun believed that the experience gained by the employee would be to the benefit of Knysna Tourism. Having regard to the amount of money involved, one would have expected
Shaun to first clear this decision with his employer, the Board. This Shaun did not do. It is indicative of the fact that Shaun knew that this trip was out of order, in that when questioned about this trip by the Board at the Golf Club, Shaun mislead the Board members by indicating that this trip was a sponsored trip when it was not so. This action of Shaun is grossly dishonest... Taking the totality of the charges into consideration, Shaun has been found guilty of gross misconduct, gross dishonesty, gross negligence and gross insubordination. My recommendation to the Board is that Shaun’s employment be terminated with or without notice.”

Instead, Shaun van Eck was given R270,000 after signing a non-disclosure agreement. He got a golden handshake, the Public a golden shower. I consider it to have been a bribe so that we would be denied the whole truth, and so it would be harder to hold the guilty accountable.

The press release by Knysna Tourism on 25 January 2013 conveniently excluded mentioning it:

"The matter between former Knysna Tourism CEO and the Knysna Tourism Board was settled in an amicable manner. In a joint statement the parties confirm that they leave the relationship without prejudice, wishing each other well for their respective efforts in advancing Knysna as a top tourism destination. The terms of the settlement remains confidential by agreement.”

Confidential, my arse. Cover-up was afoot.

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The seriousness of the situation was amplified by the municipal officials and politicians on the Board of Directors. They were supposed to be held ultimately responsible for the organisation. It wasn't Barnard’s job to look beyond Van Eck but it's obvious that others needed punishing too. Van Eck, to a degree, was right to be aggrieved, not as an innocent but as scapegoat. Whereas he got sheared, other Board Members in dereliction of duty seemingly got rewarded.

Development Officer Glendyrr Fick was the employee “sent” to Jamaica via several days layover in New York. She'd told people about her personal holiday destination before it become a 'staff' trip. Afterwards, she became Knysna Tourism's Office Manager and got a raise.

DA Councillor Esme Edge got promoted to Deputy Mayor. The Section 80 Finance
Committee should have been one of the first to deal with tourism's illegal finances but she was its Chairperson.

DA Councillor Michelle Wasserman moved to the Speaker position. Later she left for a few years, returning in 2018 as the DA Federal Executive's intended Mayor. They haven't fulfilled their plan but she joined the Mayoral Committee, doubling her pay within 2 month of re-entering Council.

Mayor Georlene Wolmarans became the Speaker after the 2016 elections, meaning she hung onto the same pay grade.

ANC Chief Whip Stephen de Vries had his studies illegally paid for by the Knysna Municipality, approved by Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Grant Easton and the DA-majority Council. It wouldn't be surprising if his silence about DA corruption, a misnomer as he was involved in it, eventually traded for a well-paying Government job (for which he seemed to be studying towards).

CFO Grant Easton was promoted to Municipal Manager, allegedly paid more than allowed.

For almost 2 years after Van Eck got pushed out, Knysna Tourism ran without a CEO. That, alone, should've stopped its funding. The company was controlled by a few Board members headed by Chairperson Greg Vogt. As company rules stipulated that only non-executive Board members were allowed, it was illegal for Vogt to act as an Executive. Yet he did, illegally paid as a consultant through a third party until he inevitably became CEO.

Vice-Chair Nan Raturat became the Chairperson. Edge would later renew her marriage vows at Raturat's guest house, Villa Castollini.

And for the next 4 years, despite continuing scandal and my growing protest, Knysna Tourism continued to be funded by politicians from the Public purse.

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Premier Helen Zille never loved our town in her role as leader of our province. But she 'loved' us as a DA politician before elections. As she’d done for the local one in 2011, she appeared before the 2014 general election. Again, Knysna's issues were ignored. Again, we were told, in mostly general terms, that the DA was terrific and the ANC sucked.

I'll explain later in the book how Zille tried to embarrass me but relevant here is that she refused to answer my questions which I wouldn't let go. MEC Alan Winde came to
her rescue by telling the crowd that he’d have a meeting with me the following day.

Winde was accompanied by then DA Constituency Chairperson Peter Myers and DA Concordia Branch Manager Magda Moos. It turned out their goal was to only pretend to be helpful whilst maintaining the political wall against me.

This is an extract from a letter I sent them and Zille out of frustration:

"The goal has long been to understand the financial situation and management of Knysna. This email primarily concerns the Knysna Tourism aspect of that. It further serves to assess the credibility of Alan Winde’s, Peter Meyers’ and a DA Branch Manager’s offer to assist, and the DA’s claim to transparency and accountability.

I have exhaustively tried to get answers and being repeatedly blocked for almost 3 years by the DA, Knysna Municipality and the Knysna Tourism Board. It is notable that you, Alan Winde, have been contacted several times the past 2 years. It beggars belief that you, as MEC for Tourism, whose made many visits to Knysna Tourism, are not aware of the problems and controversy they’ve experienced.

At our Feb 1 2014 meeting at the Log-Inn Hotel, you promised to deliver detailed budgets of Knysna Tourism but have so far failed to do so. However, in an email, you said, 'I am aware that Mike’s mail below asks for deeper detail on the tourism budgets. Once he gives me the detail needed, I will ask for it on your behalf and report back to the group.' I’d clearly asked for a budget, as I have many times, that shows exactly who got paid what. Nevertheless, to seize the opportunity for 100% clarity on Knysna Tourism’s finances, I’ve supplied a summary of my previously, unanswered questions (which are 100% relevant).

It is further notable that you, Alan, have refused several requests for an audio copy of the Log-Inn meeting – that recording should have been the foundation for follow-up. It makes no sense (except if the reason is to delay) that I provide the minutes (from memory) of the meeting before you will give me the recording you have in your possession. The recording would be 100% accurate.

Alan Winde, please erase my doubts and worry that this is yet another blockade by the DA. Please respond to this email positively and actively. Please be genuinely helpful. Let’s get this matter behind us and look towards the future of Knysna.
Helen Zille, I address you (again), as DA Leader and Premier of the Western Cape, as you have also been aware of my complaints and requests for investigation into Knysna Tourism for over two years. This bad situation has been allowed to carry on for far too long. You’ve failed to respond to a single complaint and publicly perpetuated the falsehood that I’d been helped. You have failed to address those who’ve poorly represented us. I can hope that you will finally step in, first by responding with emailed good intention and, secondly, by encouraging all involved (that includes your local councillors) to cooperate. You should extend that goodwill by responding to the challenge I made to both you and Alan, in the letter entitled, ‘Dear Helen Zille, You’re My Disappointment’. These are serious issues that should not be recklessly (or intentionally) disregarded.

Your silence conflicts with the DA’s promised rules of engagement and accountability and thus, in turn, has become a serious issue itself.

Please start upholding the DA’s website promise of 'a maximum 30-day turnaround time for national correspondence'. Your failure to act has cost Knysna a fortune, and contradicts the local election promise of austerity.

The Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act does not allow you to ignore maladministration (and I’ve repeatedly made you aware of the maladministration and possible fraud at Knysna Tourism – ignorance is impossible). You have also failed the Local Government Municipal Finance Act which states 'that a municipal entity must investigate allegations of financial misconduct against the accounting officer, a senior manager or other official of the entity'.

There has only been silence, delays and reasons why not to answer my questions – that can only be labelled as cover-up. Choose to stop that negative process now. What’s in the best interests of Knysna should be in the DA’s interests too!

Honour your claimed DA policy of committing to ‘efficiency and accountability’, ‘clear complaints and feedback mechanisms’, and having ‘constant and ongoing interaction between the government and its voters at all times’.

Say that you will gladly cooperate (because you believe in transparency).”

Winde refused to hand over the recording of that meeting. I believe he wouldn’t because it would implicate him.
Moos, a Public figure, was ridiculously granted a protection order against me for me taking her photo and blogging that she’d lied about promising to sort the Knysna Tourism issue. Although she never followed through, she also laid a criminal charge of crimen injuria and initiated suing me for R100,000. Yeah, I took a photo of a Public figure. How's that for oppression. It's obvious that the DA wanted to scare me into silence. You should be frightened too.

Moos' daughter was best friends with Mayor Georlene Wolmaran's daughter, both working for the Municipality in the planning department. Soon thereafter, her daughter got a job working in the Mayor's office.

Moos' case opened the floodgate. Others involved in the murkiness of Knysna Tourism also launched cases against me. Edge's life partner, Advocate Julie Seton, was deeply involved in several of these court attacks. It was a DA concert for the deaf and dangerous.

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Although I'm telling you what happened topic by topic, know that the madness was overlapping. It was hard being poor and trying to cope with it all.

It had soon become obvious that Local Government, Provincial Government, the DA and their 'opposition' were never going to enforce accountability. Consequently, I'd laid complaint with the Office of the Public Protector.

Like many South Africans, I admired the institution because its leader, Thuli Madonsela, seemed to be a rare beacon of light in the fear about our country's future. That enchantment was slowly replaced with the reality that the Office of the Public Protector is as rotten like the rest of South Africa's Government. I use the present tense intentionally. I'll explain more about that in next book but note that my faith was shaken in those early days.

Senior Investigator Bruce Wessels ran the George branch of the Public Protector. Although 60km away, it served our area and many others. He contacted then Municipal Manager Lauren Waring who wouldn't cooperate as, according her, Knysna Tourism was a private company she had no control over. Instead of laughing at the absurdity and illegality, Wessels accepted her reason for refusing assistance. Maybe they laughed, instead, behind my back.

Knysna Tourism's existence was obviously dependent on the millions in Public funds Waring approved. Additionally, the Board of Directors and its committees included
politicians and municipal officials. Waring was one of them.

Wessels chose to ignore that tourism falls under the competencies of a municipality. It doesn't matter whether one outsources, makes it semi-private or public private participation. It falls under the Public Sector and that means it's the Municipality's responsibility. And the MFMA applies wherever Public funds goes, no matter how many times it passes hands. We'd discussed it. Wessels knew it was the Public Protector's job to investigate.

Wessels ignored the minutes of a Knysna Tourism Finance meeting in February 2013, in which Grant Easton, the CFO of the Municipality, had stated that Public funds would cover Tourism's debt - it's illegal to fund debt with public funds.

Wessels also ignored that the only grant-in-aid that Knysna Municipality's Grant-in-Aid committee didn't assess and process was Tourism's. Consequently, that was serious breakdown in Supply Chain Management (SCM), and long after the fact that the contract to manage tourism should've gone out to tender but never did.

The organisation even received grant-in-aids whilst in contravention of its SLA with the Municipality.

In 2014, a document surfaced as a scary snapshot of Knysna Tourism's finances. There were “unforeseen” monthly expenses of R20,000. I assumed that was Chairman Vogt's pay on the side. Plus there was another R33,000 listed under consultants. Strangely, cash wages of R45,000 were also being paid out.

The biggest concern was that one of the stipulations for Tourism to receive funding (and thus exist), was that it had to spend 20% of the funds it was given on development for previously disadvantaged communities. That amounted to approximately R800,000 that year yet only R1,000 was being spent monthly. I considered them robbing the poor.

There was obviously a plot against me when Greg Vogt, like Moos, laid a charge of crimen injuria against me at the local police station. It never got to court but Vogt also applied for, and received, a protection order under the Protection from Harassment Act (PHA).

Public Protector investigator Bruce Wessel, who'd previously promised me he would never let the matter go, let it go... and sent a letter to Vogt encouraging him to find a legal solution to stop my allegations. Wessels couldn't have known I'd come into possession of that letter, after he 'warned' me to expect legal action.
Even to the casual biased observer, the DA's choice of threat over cooperation had to look suspicious.

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Despite the losses and unresolved issues, Waring had a plan to turn Knysna Tourism into a bigger organisation that would also represent local industry, essentially becoming a Chamber of Business and a Tourism agency. Considering the blatant crookery she'd allowed (and participated in), it's possible she'd had that plan a long time, and had no intention of it being derailed. That attempt at control from a foothold of corruption frightened me, more so because I'd heard that MEC Alan Winde was supportive.

She'd get her way, Knysna Tourism eventually becoming Knysna & Partners. And then it'd fall apart, another financial loss to the Public. Thereafter, it reverted back to the name of Knysna Tourism and its original mandate.

Before that happened, so that it could become Knysna & Partners, a consultant was hired. Dirk Joubert was an employee of Organisation Development Africa (ODA). He's currently a Director there.

Vogt, when he'd been trying to win me over, had told me that Joubert's introduction to Tourism had been through Waring who had Knysna Municipality pay his initial fees. Allegedly, no tender had gone out, the decision done without consulting Knysna Tourism's Board of Directors. Frustration was evident in a letter Vogt sent Waring. Vogt also alleged that Waring knew Joubert personally.

But Vogt would quickly adapt to her game. After all, he wanted to become CEO. It was soon apparent that Vogt had no intention of giving me what I'd been after for years, a detailed breakdown of exactly who'd gotten money from the organisation. It's possible he'd strung me along to make me less critical whilst he sought to solidify his position.

Joubert and Vogt worked together to change the constitution of Knysna Tourism so that it could become that new organisation with greater mandate (which included allowing Board Members to be paid). Tourism took over paying for ODA's services.

Vogt would dodgily bill his own services via an outside company called Conservation Global in which he was soon to become an ex-partner. The company received no benefit as they paid the full amount to Vogt when they received it. I believe the owners of Conservation Global that Vogt had pulled the wool pulled over their eyes. They were genuinely angry and, after a delay, transparent about what happened. But
as Swiss foreigners operating a conservation program, they were understandably unwilling to be public.

It was a cozy arrangement between Vogt and ODA, leading to obvious conflict of interest. Joubert was hired to narrow down the 115 applications for the position of Knysna Tourism CEO. Vogt made the short list.

Leslie Pieters, an ex-Board member and well-known restaurateur, was observer to the process. He stated in an email to me:

"ODA has served as a consultant to the Knysna Municipality for the best part of 14 years... He has been involved in the selection process of the past 4 CEO’s of Knysna Tourism. In each case he had worked with, had knowledge of, or had interacted with various candidates that applied for the position. This time it was no different. The process in each case, including this one, required the sorting out of over a hundred applicants to a short list, then after more checks and balances, to a final five candidates. Dirk Joubert’s role as the facilitator of this process did not compromise or complicate the process."

The attributes Pieters was claiming were ironically the reddest flags of all. ODA’s long-term business with Knysna Municipality was a worry, not a benefit. As an experienced businessman with a long history with Knysna Tourism, and a man well aware of my protest, he should have realised that the selection process was corrupted.

ODA had other contracts with Knysna Municipality. It was earning money approved by Lauren Waring who was central to the cover-up of what happened at Knysna Tourism. She was also one of the three directors selecting Vogt for the CEO position. Waring was, according to Vogt, directly responsible for Joubert initially getting the Tourism work. ODA went on to earn money from Knysna Tourism which Vogt would have approved as the unofficial CEO, whilst Joubert was working with him. And Joubert’s past interaction with several of the candidates and chosen CEOs should’ve been further worry at conflict of interest. It’s human nature to like or dislike somebody more than a stranger.

Joubert lied he’d provide me answers as to how much ODA had earned. Knysna Municipality refused to comply with my PAIA request, illogically stating that “the work involved in processing the information would substantially and unreasonably divert the resources of the municipality.”

Vogt was arguably the worst person to represent Knysna. He was under investigation for alleged abuse of animals. This was never proven but at the time he was in major
dispute with the Knysna Elephant Park, his previous employers and the second biggest tourism attraction for Knysna. It was the biggest scandal at the time.

That the town was a tourist-based economy selling nature should have made Knysna Tourism shy away from controversy. Instead, those in other kinds of conflict of interest, embraced Vogt. They had to if they wanted to prevent being held accountable for past transgressions.

It's unsurprising that Knysna Tourism repeatedly and publicly stated that the selection process had been rigorous despite the fact they'd skipped the obvious reference check with Vogt's previous employers and partners who were mad at him. As marketers, they understand that sufficient repetition, not facts, planted 'truth' in the Public mind.

At Vogt's inauguration as CEO, from which I was banned, Municipal Manager Lauren tripped over herself when she said:

"The Board took advice on the [elephant abuse] matter. We spoke to legal practitioners, we spoke to environmentalists and we spoke to various authorities that are concerned in this matter or similar matters. And, based on that, there is an issue, it's not going to go away, it can't go away... but that shouldn't prejudice the appointment, in any way, of Greg. The Board will take steps to protect or mitigate any reputational risk that this might pose... One of the reasons why I'm on the Board is to protect the Municipality's investment."

Mayor Georlene Wolmarans made a statement in support of Vogt which claimed,

"His leadership is exactly what we need as a new chapter opens for Knysna Tourism. Council is confident that with Mr Vogt at the helm, our tourism industry will continue on a path of success."

That success never happened. Instead the company and local government sank deeper into controversy and abuse of Public funds.

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Summarily, Vogt became CEO, granted the position by a panel that conveniently included his ex-fellow Board members; Municipal Manager Waring, ANC Chief Whip De Vries and Deputy Chair Nan Raturat. They were all involved in the period that finances were in the red and Van Eck was farted out with misappropriated money.

The Knysna Tourism Corporate Governance code of practice and conduct states that the Board of Directors "must ensure that all decisions on all material matters remain in the hands of the Board" and is "ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COMPANY."
So if Vogt, Ratarat, De Vries etc. were Board members supposed to carry most of the blame, why was Van Eck out and Vogt in?

I described Vogt's ascension as Knysna being “smacked in the face” and as “the worst news I'd heard in five years... He isn't only the man at the centre of the elephant abuse scandal but also the primary figure in covering up the nepotism and favouritism that led Knysna Tourism into financial ruin.”

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I laughed when the Knysna Elephant Park, of which I'm fond, sponsored two large pot plants as part of a street beautification drive. One was emblazoned with the Park's name, the other with AERU, their research centre. They were placed either side of the entrance to Knysna Tourism. They were angry with Vogt and Knysna Tourism... and he'd be reminded of that every day.

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The need for cover-up made predicting some actions simple.

Vogt's appointment was convenient for the Board and especially the DA. Keeping it in-house, Nan Raturat replaced Vogt as Chair of the Board. I predicted that CFO Grant Easton would become Municipal Manager. That would protect him and the others involved, including the DA-majority Council who continually approved funds. The necessity doubled for those councillors who were also directors on Knysna Tourism's Board.

The latter included Speaker Richard Dawson who filed papers against me in High Court but never followed through. Two of Van Eck's friends did. Councillor Edge too. Although not appointed, Edge's life partner, Advocate Seton, applied to be a Tourism Board director, and, much later, for several positions in the Municipality. She eventually secured a small, allegedly unadvertised, position on the Planning Tribunal. Councillor Eleanore Spies would take a turn on Tourism's Board before becoming Mayor in 2016. When I queried her, she lied to my face, laughing that she would never be a director and risk being my target. She'd later steal Public funds to sic lawyers on me.

Frank Kirsten was previously a reporter for the Knysna-Plett Herald newspaper who’d refused to act on my evidence against Knysna Tourism. Consequently, it was unsurprising when she became the new Public Relations officer for Knysna & Partners. It was her that had refused me entry to Vogt's inauguration where it was guaranteed
I’d have been the only one to ask questions they didn’t want to answer. After Knysna & Partners imploded, Kirsten was contracted illegally by Mayor Spies as the Communications Manager for Knysna Municipality.

In 2018, Spies was overthrown by DA Councillors Mark Willemse and Peter Myers who used the funding of Tourism as one of their selfish weapon towards getting power. The DA Federal Executive, MEC Anton Bredell, MEC Bonginkosi Madikizela and MEC Alan Winde were angry, attempting to restore power to their cover-up faction.

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The Knysna Council agenda supplementary for August 13 2018 mentioned Knysna Tourism’s funding and contract more than ever before. This was possibly because Director Planning Marlene Boyce was the Acting Municipal Manager whilst the agenda was prepared. Boyce is a friend of Councillor Peter Myers. Both Myers and Boyce were against the last contract with Knysna Tourism, Myers having miraculously reversed his position. Well, not miraculous at all as he was fighting for his survival against other DA members.

The legal argument used by the Knysna Municipality against the funding of Knysna Tourism was the same I’d stated for years. The Municipality and Council always knew it was illegal. Because of the faction fight (Myers and Willemse versus the rest of the DA), they were finally forced to temporarily change their relationship with Knysna Tourism.

The report makes no mention of the May 2017 Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr Attorneys legal opinion which would have substantiated this and my position. The opinion, procured by the Municipality, was rumoured to be expensive. It must be considered fruitless expenditure as the illegality of Knysna Tourism has always been logical i.e. I’m a citizen versus a Government that knows more than me.

Nevertheless, the Cliffe Decker Hofmeyr report made it clear that politicians should not be on the Board of Tourism and that the services must be put out to tender.

Although the SLA had always been illegal, the report states that the SLA expired in June 2018. That meant that Tourism was funded for at least another two months beyond the contract.

The report refers to a meeting with the provincial Departments of the Premier and Tourism. Notably it doesn’t state with whom but with or without them, Premier Zille and MEC Winde would be responsible, the two most relevant people who’d failed to
act on my complaints for years.

I was secretly informed that MEC Winde had chosen to ignore the report when it first came out. He’d allegedly ordered the DA to approve Tourism’s illegal funding again (which they did). This is substantiated to a degree by my call to Knysna Tourism's then Chairperson, Elmay Bouwer. According to her, I was the first to inform her that Winde had ordered her company’s funding. The funding happened soon thereafter.

On September 15 2018, I received a partial copy of an investigation that had been hidden from the Public. The De_Swardt_Vogel_Myambo_Attorneys_report noted 'irregularities' and called for disciplinary hearings and criminal charges against Mayor Spies and 2 directors. For different reasons to mine, one of the charges was that Knysna Tourism was illegally funded because then Municipal Manager Kam Chetty's contract had been fraudulently backdated in order to try make the transfer of funds look legitimate.

As I've similarly done in the past, I informed the DA Federal Executive, DA Leader Mmusi Maimane, Zille, Winde, Bredell and many others. As usual, they chose silence instead of embracing the fight against corruption. I don't believe in sunny ignorance during a flood.

Councillor Spies got a protection order against me just before the report was presented to Council in a meeting closed to the Public. Again, I believe the DA was gagging me against the Public’s best interest.

Instead of the DA punishing her, Councillor Spies was promoted to Speaker of the Garden Route District under which Knysna falls. She's on the Mayoral Committee (MAYCO) with her 'husband', Rowan Spies.

Shaun van Eck may have been the earliest to leave the story but resurfaced as a director on the Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism Board in 2018. Interestingly, Jannie Gie, another previous Director of Knysna Tourism, was also on the Board. It would thus seem impossible that Van Eck’s controversial background is unknown. More so considering that he assumed the position during the DA's reign over the city, appointed by Mayor Athol Trollip’s office. Trollip, previously a member of the DA Federal Executive, also ignored my couriered complaint.

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The DA’s next move was to outsource Knysna’s tourism function to WESGRO. They're a tourism, trade, investment and promotion agency; a private company that's taken
over much of the Provincial and Local Government's mandate in the Western Province. Essentially, they're the bigger and successful version of what the failed Knysna & Partners was meant to be.

Despite the faction wars, both sides of the DA were strangely determined to support WESGRO, having learned nothing from their sins with Knysna Tourism. New Mayor Mark Willemsen skipped the legally required Public participation process and his previous, politically motivated concerns about Knysna Tourism's funding. Maybe because he wanted to make a deal with the DA leadership to stay in power (they'd wanted him out).

Willemsen released a statement in July 2018 that Knysna Municipality had made the decision to go with WESGRO. Thereafter, there was a photo of him and MEC Alan Winde smiling for the signing. WESGRO's contract was clearly illegal, and thus warrants a deeper look into the company's role provincially. And, once more, no one punished, the cover-up continued.

WESGRO already has a relationship with the DA's provincial seat of power, the City of Cape Town. It cannot be ruled out that the bigger relationship there would out influence the interests of Knysna. It's worrying that Alan Winde, as a DA bigwig and possibly the next Premier, would retain indirect influence.

My fears are validated by the DA and Provincial Government long being aware and in possession of documents relating to my complaints about Knysna Tourism to Parliament (2015-2018) and the Public Protector (2013). My legal requests for info from Knysna Municipality, Knysna Tourism and the Office of the Premier remain unanswered.

After all that's happened, it's impossible to be shocked by the fact that Tim Harris, the CEO of WESGRO, is an ex-DA politician. He used to develop their economic policies and was previously DA Leader Tony Leon's Chief of Staff. It's likely that Zille and Winde have a close relationship with him the same way they do with Leon whose company, Resolve Communications, received communications contracts from the City of Cape Town.

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Whether the DA's power at perception management succeeds or not, it won't change the fact that private tourism companies are being illegally funded from Public funds. I use the plural. This may have begun with the deceptively named Knysna Tourism but I expect it to eventually storm across the province.
I was told MEC Alan Winde couldn’t afford to allow Knysna Tourism to be exposed and punished because that would affect “another 30 municipalities” who were similarly and illegally funding private companies to fulfill their tourism mandate. The number “30” may have been generalised speech but there are coincidentally 30 local and district municipalities in the Western Cape.

I know that nearby Mossel Bay Tourism and Bitou Tourism are also Section 21 companies mostly funded by Local Government. The ANC recently took over Bitou Municipality (a.k.a. Plettenberg Bay) but the company was set up during DA rule, with help from Knysna’s Greg Vogt.

Consequently, I don’t know what the final loss will be but it’s reasonable to conclude that it will run into hundreds of millions of rands.

Getting the whole truth and a final figure is obstructed.

The latest barricade was erected by Solly Fourie who worked for Winde as Head of Department Economic Development & Tourism. I sent him a formal request under the Promotion to Access of Information Act (PAIA). His response to my PAIA was:

"I need to draw your attention to the fact that the Department is not in possession of a funding model for the tourism function of any municipality in the Western Cape. Local tourism is a local government competence. As such, the Department also does not have any record of money received by municipalities from public funds nor in respect of any agreements entered into. It is therefore suggested that in order to obtain copies of the relevant records you request directly to the relevant municipalities. Hope the above information suffices."

My response was:

"Your wrongful stance saves me the appeal delay. From the Constitution, one goes down to Provincial Legislation and thereafter to Local Government Legislation to look at competencies. Tourism may falls under the competencies of a municipality but it has to go through you. What you’re effectively saying is that you and provincial government doesn’t matter, doesn’t need to exist. That, of course, is impossible because you, Solly Fourie, do exist. In your position, you cannot be unaware of who I am and my fight against the illegal funding of Knysna Tourism and your boss. Your argument is obviously misleading and obstructive. It shows loyalty to Alan Winde and the DA, not the Public. It’s loyalty to corruption. If you wish to prove me wrong, then tell me that it
matters to you that tourism companies are [allowed to] be illegally funded by your department. That would be a positive beginning.”

Fourie never responded.

And when I appealed anyway, he ignored me.

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I was told third-hand that Winde said that he can get Western Cape Government lawyers to find any loophole, and that, if need be, the Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr report will be countered.

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Keeping it in the faction is the name of the game.

Councillor Wasserman, who'd been among the first in the DA to deny me info, had left Council but now returned. That had been rumoured before her selection so it's possible that the others who applied were abused as smokescreen. She'd been associated with Winde her previous term. He'd been referred to as her mentor. It's now said she's his proxy in the Knysna Council. Only future actions will confirm or deny that.

Late 2018, Winde was announced as the DA's candidate to take over from Zille as Premier in 2019. That wind was smelt by Bantu Holomisa, leader of the United Democratic Movement (UDM), way back in January 2018. He'd said that there was a plot to make Winde the Premier. I confirmed the DA's intention for Winde soon after. Again, a position had been decided before democracy had a chance to breathe. Decisions seem not be made by the Public or within party structures, only by few leading a faction within the party.

The official announcement happened the same week the DA told the Public that Michelle Wasserman was their Knysna Mayoral candidate. The DA may have invented something new in their pursuit of faction politics. No local election was in sight and, even if Cape Town never liked him, they already had a sitting Mayor in Willemse. But, as stated, they went quiet after Willemse signed the WESGRO contract.

Zille would be dumped into the area too. Or maybe she volunteered. I'll leave that bruise for the sequel.

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The DA could have chosen to admit a problem – fix it → punish → and move on. That
would have benefited Knysna, provided stability and saved a fortune. It would've backed up the DA’s claims to be anti-maladministration and corruption. It would've saved them from almost a decade of controversy. It would have made the DA, as a whole, look good.

Instead, for the sake of protecting a few, cover-up ensued.

It's logical there's greater motivation, a lot more at stake than rot in a small town, a bigger reason for the cover-ups and intimidation that'll grow in this book. I believe that one turn of the key to unravelling this mess, and explaining why the DA tried to destroy me, is Winde. He's in the cross-hairs just before he's expected to be promoted into the province's highest position.

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These twists and turns of people and positions reminds me of a cartoon in which a teacher is speaking to a monkey, a penguin, a goldfish and an elephant: “For a fair selection, everybody has to take the same exam. Your first test is to climb that tree.”
Man of dubious hats, Greg Vogt, and controversial Municipal Manager Lauren Waring
MEC Tourism Alan Winde (now Premier candidate)