

## #LightSAred shines bright and gains government attention



Montecasino, Johannesburg

On 05 August, South Africa and her government acknowledged the technical production and live events industry following a massive mobilisation under the banner of #LightSAred.

The industry galvanized its collective resources to light 505 buildings and sites across South Africa, including Table Mountain in Cape Town, to draw attention to the plight of the industry under current lockdown restrictions.

With no income for five months and no indication of when the prohibition on live events will come to an end, the technical production and live events industry is under enormous pressure. The symbolic resistance gained attention across the globe and achieved its goal of drawing a response from the South African Department of Sport, Arts, and Cultural (DSAC).



Table Mountain – Photography Credit: A Gorman

#LightSared, was initiated by Duncan Riley of DWR Distribution three weeks ago and quickly gained the support of The Southern African Communications Industries Association (SACIA), Technical Production Services Association (TPSA) and SA Events Council.

Over the two week campaign, Sharif Baker of the TPSA and spokesperson for the #LightSared, engaged in constant communication with radio, television and print media while attempting to engage with relevant government departments.



Northcliff Tower

“On the advice of our council, Advocate Lance Brogden, our last communication was issued to the government on 4 August, requesting a discussion where we could collaborate on finding solutions for the events sector,” says Baker. “We received an acknowledgement

from the DSAC the following day. Collen Hlatshwayo, deputy director for cultural development in event technology, met with us on 5 August for a round table discussion and was willing to participate in an interview on the #LightSAred live stream broadcast.”



uMhlanga Lighthouse

“We can confirm that the DSAC now acknowledges our existence as the technical production and live event industry, is aware of our cause, our requests, and has accepted the undertaking to engage in a consultative process to develop a strategy to ensure that the sector does not cease to exist during this time,” said Baker.

#LightSared saw companies, individuals in the live events industry, and the general public jump at the opportunity to light their cities in red. The event included a live stream broadcast by SkyRoomLive from virtual studios at MGG in Johannesburg and the Solid Group in Cape Town.

Said Duncan Riley, “This was a humbling experience. When we initially started the #LightSared movement, we thought we’d reach a few rental companies and theatres in our industry. Nicole Barnes from our team came up with the name #LightSared. We thought we’d create an invite to see what people would think of the idea, and all of a sudden, people were on board, and that’s when the rollercoaster ride started.”



“We were just surrounded by awesome people. The movement took on a life of its own and grew organically to become a large-scale national rollout.” Riley points out that all of the companies involved used their own equipment and generators, and crew volunteered their time at no cost. “If we had planned this thing, it would not have gone as well. We didn’t even officially launch! As messages flew, the artwork leaked, and before we knew it, it took off. Everyone was hungry. They were hungry to dust their boots off and were wanting to get sore legs again, push a flightcase, and roll a cable. The need was there. Everyone was ready. This has unified the industry and a renewed honour and respect for each other.”

Baker concludes, “The entire experience was surreal. Even this morning, I thought, ‘wow did we really do this?’ I feel honoured to be part of the campaign and to be asked to speak for #LightSAred. It is a cause worth fighting for, and we believe we can assist the government to kickstart the economy by hearing our collective voice.”