



# THE HILTONIAN SOCIETY NPC

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(Reg. No. 1928/001172/08)  
(NPO Reg. 017-583 ● PBO No. 1811/13/2644)

18 March 2025

To Members of the Hilton College Community

You will have read in various press reports and possibly heard interviews on SAFM during the past fortnight that Hilton College's land is the subject of an alleged land claim. Given the importance of land-related matters in our country and the strong emotions which they naturally evoke, we thought it important to provide a more detailed response to these reports beyond our initial response published on 3 March 2025.

At the outset we wish to dispel the notion contained in the various reports that the land on which Hilton College is situated or the property which it acquired some years back in Howick West to relocate the Valley residents is the subject of any land claim. This is factually incorrect and amounts to nothing more than media sensationalism and irresponsible journalism.

Set out below is a high-level summary of the relevant land matters.

## **Alleged land claim at Hilton College**

There have been several articles published in the past two weeks by, among others, Business Day, BusinessLIVE and News 24 regarding an alleged land claim at Hilton College. These reports are all premised on a judgment handed down by the Land Claims Court on 21 February 2025 and which can be accessed [here](#).

The salient issues of this judgment include the following:

- The claimant in this matter, the Inkosi Sikholwa Alson Zuma, initially lodged a land claim application in 1998 for certain properties in and around Howick and in the Lions River District. These properties were unfortunately referenced in the court papers then as being land "in and around Hilton College" (which reference was carried though in the judgment concerned). This land claim has been the subject of various legal interventions and court hearings since then resulting in the latest judgment referenced above. However, the parcels of land referenced in the judgment and also in the relevant Government Gazette and which are the subject of the reported land claim are identified as being Ashely 947, Grootvalley 941, Rietspruit 899, Rietvallei 1043 and lot 50 No. 2859 in the Lions River District.

Board of Governors:

AG Johnston (Chairman), STM Seopa (Deputy Chairman), JA Clark, BW Falcon, DR Gain, GA Hancock, ZS Jali, CA Jankowitz, AE Jooste, MC Khuzwayo, BL Mapongwana, DJ Wingfield

- Following a detailed examination by The Hiltonian Society in conjunction with its attorneys, we are comfortable that none of the properties cited in the judgment are in any way associated with or belong to the Hiltonian Society, a non-profit company that owns Hilton College, or any of its associated companies. We can only speculate that the unfortunate reference to Hilton College in the court papers and judgment was used as a convenient spatial reference given the relatively well-known location of Hilton College.
- As a general matter, we are not aware of the Hiltonian Society or the land on which Hilton College is situated, ever being the subject of a land claim and neither are we aware of any pending or threatened land claim in respect of this property.

### **Labour Tenant Matter**

Whilst dealing with matters relating to land and Hilton College in particular, we thought it helpful to add for the sake of completeness that The Hiltonian Society was involved in a labour tenant claim some years back which was successfully settled in 2019.

In South Africa, our law makes provision for redress for citizens deemed to have been labour tenants under the previous dispensation. A labour tenant is a person who was afforded a right of residence on a farm in exchange for his/her labour.

Previously, four families who lived in the Teapots Valley, on the Hilton College estate, approached the Land Claims Court regarding an alleged labour-tenant application. In this regard, the Hiltonian Society has always maintained that the claimants did not qualify as labour tenants and the matter was amicably settled in the Land Claims Court on 3 September 2019.

The settlement agreement concluded, and which was confirmed by Judge Meer of the Land Claims Court, expressly recorded the election by these four claimants and their descendants to move to alternative land, provided by the state and situated within 40 kilometres of Hilton College. The Hiltonian Society's obligation, in terms of this agreement, was to contribute to the cost of the construction of houses for these families. Up until that point, The Hiltonian Society had already assisted 84 families to relocate from the Teapots Valley to Howick West to take possession of freehold housing built in large by funding provided by the Hiltonian Society via the Endowment Foundation.

Regrettably, and in breach of this agreement, the four families concerned later decided not to relocate and they remain resident in the Teapots Valley. While the Society continues to reserve its rights in this regard and maintains that these claimants and their descendants were not labour tenants, it has respected their rights under the Extension of Security of Tenure Act, which protects the rights of individuals who live on farms and in other rural areas.

## **Public Discourse**

As we know, land and its ownership in South Africa is a highly emotive topic often linked to issues such as affluence and inequality. This linked with news items such as those which we have witnessed this past fortnight, and which stir emotions and create sensation in the minds of the wider public, are unfortunately a reality and part of the society in which we live today.

The Hiltonian Society has and remains acutely sensitive to the socio-economic realities facing South Africa today and, in this regard, has for the past 20 years been proactive in uplifting and improving the lives of, among others, the community which has lived in the Teapots Valley. This has included, inter alia, the successful and voluntary relocation of most of the families living in the Valley to brick-and-mortar houses in Howick West, which have electricity, potable water and daily transport to and from Hilton College for those who still work at the college. This relocation process has taken place in close collaboration with the Department of Human Settlements and Rural Development and was awarded the Govan Mbeki Award in 2016 for Best Integrated Residential Development as well as being a runner-up at the National Govan Mbeki Awards in November 2016.

Phase four of this relocation programme is awaiting approvals from the relevant authorities.

We continue to closely monitor these circumstances and matters ancillary thereto and will provide further updates and information to our community and stakeholders as and when the circumstances require it.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Johnston'.

Andrew Johnston  
Chairman: The Hiltonian Society

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G. Harris'.

George Harris  
Headmaster: Hilton College