



AS THE WORLD MOVES

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RESHAPING THE STATUS QUO

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Greg Nott on Energy
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Adaptation, innovation, evolution: a new chapter anchored on a century of trust

Drawing on a century of South African legal practice and a clear view of what's next, pioneering law firm Deneys has embraced its new identity as an independent, full-service African firm.

For more than a century, the renowned African law firm now known as Deneys has adapted, evolved, and served clients through some of the most complex and consequential periods in South Africa's history, from political transformation and changing economic cycles to a global pandemic, says CEO Brent Botha.

Botha says he is most excited about the clarity that independence brings, with the leading firm becoming newly independent earlier this year, following almost fifteen years as part of the global Norton Rose Fulbright network.

Deneys has entered a new, future-focused chapter, evolving independently in tune with a changing world. Its history is not a footnote, but a foundation, says Botha. Independence offers Deneys something deeply valuable: freedom to set its own pace, invest in its own priorities, make decisions calibrated entirely around its clients and people, and be accountable to relationships built over generations.

"What excites me most is what independence means for our people: the freedom to build a firm that reflects their ambition and their values," says Michelle David, the firm's Chair of the Board. "Deneys is a platform for the next generation of great African lawyers, and I could not be prouder of what this team has built."

The new Deneys is agile, deeply connected, and firmly rooted in the African market, says Botha, a powerful proposition for clients who need deep Africa expertise informed by a genuinely global perspective.

The decade and a half spent as part of a global law firm, building lasting relationships worldwide, meeting global standards of risk, and advising on complex cross-border matters, lives on in Deneys' people.

"The global experience sharpened us, the local grounding sustained us," adds Botha. "Independence allows us to combine those strengths without friction."

With offices in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban, and more than 200 legal staff, Deneys will continue – as it has done for more than 100 years – to serve its established client base, with its lawyers advising on critical transactions, disputes, and infrastructure developments that shape South Africa.

With a refreshed brand identity and digital presence, the pioneering South African firm is committed to evolving alongside the industries and markets it serves.

"Building the Deneys brand with the firm's leadership has been one of the most rewarding projects of my career," says Cherisse Rao, Chief Marketing Officer at Deneys. "We were deliberate about every decision: our identity, our brand positioning, the way we speak to the world. The result is a brand that is entirely authentic to who we are: a firm with a century of trust behind it, and a clear, confident sense of where it is going."

Transformation is a core strategic commitment, and as Deneys we strive to build a firm that reflects the diversity and talent of the profession and the society it serves.

That blend of legacy and momentum is rare and genuinely exciting, says Botha, who began with the firm in 2005 as a candidate attorney. "We are creating a platform that allows us to invest, innovate and evolve in direct response to our priorities. Deneys represents the natural evolution of our legacy; a firm grounded in its heritage but built entirely for the future."

As it re-embraced independence this year, the firm further bolstered its strong leadership and talent base. Long-time dispute resolution specialist Sandile Khoza, who began with the firm as a candidate attorney in 2007, was appointed Regional Head for

Deneys is a platform for the next generation of great African lawyers, and I could not be prouder of what this team has built.



Durban. Employment and Labour director Cameron Wilson joined the firm's Durban office, and dispute resolution lawyer Kiasha Nagiah in Johannesburg and banking and finance lawyer CJ Grey in Cape Town were promoted to director in December. More recently, in June real estate expert Alex De Wet joined the Cape Town office as a director. This follows the promotions to Senior Associate in late April of admiralty, shipping and transport lawyer Nicholene Mazibuko, real estate attorneys Elam Matthews and Tholakele Mrubata, litigator Hlonela Mayosi, and public interest lawyer Nicola Irving.

"Creating opportunities for talented lawyers to grow, lead, and shape the future of the profession is a priority for us," says Botha. "Transformation is a core strategic commitment, and as Deneys we strive to build a firm that reflects the diversity and talent of the profession and the society it serves."

As it looks ahead to an exciting future, Deneys will continue investing in its people and in building a firm where the next generation of legal leaders can thrive.

Law as a lever for change: reshaping Africa's status quo

Earlier this year, pioneering South African firm Deneys reembraced independence after years as part of a global law firm. CEO Brent Botha reflects on transformation, the power of the law, and adapting to changing times and evolving client needs.

South African legal history is not a single, unbroken strand of progress. It is contested, layered, and sometimes contradictory. Nelson Mandela embodied the philosophy that the law exists not to preserve the status quo but to reshape it.

There is a version of Mandela that history remembers most readily – the statesman, the reconciler, the symbol. But before all that he was a lawyer. What drove him to law was a profound conviction that change was not only possible but necessary, and the legal system was one of the most powerful levers available to bring it about.

I believe that is the highest calling of the legal profession: not to preserve the status quo, but to be fluent enough in its language to reshape it.

The context is challenging.

The AI revolution and shifts in international political, economic, and diplomatic structures create an imperative for change. South Africa showed real

green shoots at the start of the year, with recovering investor sentiment and renewed momentum. Since then the conflict in the Middle East has weighed on global economic momentum, with big economic and human costs.

An independent philosophy

South Africa's legal profession is at an inflection point. The structure and philosophy that served it well in one era is being tested as the world changes.

The advantages of independence are increasingly clear as African clients seek to navigate an environment in which former geopolitical alliances are perhaps less reliable, new blocs are forming, and global law firms are facing pressures that have little to do with those on our continent.

In contrast, locally owned and governed firms can operate differently, with decision-making sitting closer to the work and the client. We can adopt new approaches and form fresh partnerships aligned to

the most pressing issues in the jurisdictions that matter most to our clients and us. Firms that joined global networks over the past three decades gained international discipline and a generation of African lawyers comfortable at the highest levels of cross-border work.

That foundation is secure. The question is whether the structure that built it remains the right one for the decade ahead. The ability to select the right international partner for each matter, based entirely on client need, can produce better outcomes for clients with complex cross-border requirements.

Nor is there a need to abandon the disciplines and standards set during years inside global leaders. The most credible local firms are those that have taken these lessons and have applied them on their own terms, in their own markets, with the agility independence allows. Independent firms can offer fresh perspective on the South African context, the issues facing companies navigating the challenge

The issues facing companies navigating the challenge to deliver for their stakeholders, and the greater South African imperative of inclusive economic empowerment.



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to deliver for their stakeholders, and the greater South African imperative of inclusive economic empowerment.

People and purpose

AI is compressing the traditional legal pyramid. The work that once occupied teams of junior associates in professional services firms is increasingly absorbed by AI. For global firms optimising for efficiency, it becomes the justification to hire fewer juniors. But in South Africa that calculus must include the youth unemployment crisis, the intergenerational transfer of professional opportunity, and the symbolic and material importance of black South Africans building careers in the upper echelons of law.

These are not side considerations; they are the whole point.

As AI changes the economics, businesses must not abandon their pipelines because the country needs it and because building the next generation of legal talent is part of what it means to be a responsible anchor institution. If you stop developing junior practitioners now, the pipeline of experienced senior talent begins to thin within a decade.

A South Africa with world-class, independently governed legal institutions, a deepened talent pipeline, and the agility to serve clients on their own terms is not an aspiration; it is an immense opportunity.



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Positive energy: powering Africa to deliver a better future for the world

Ahead of the 2026 Africa Energy Forum (AEF) being held in Cape Town under the theme of 'Building Africa's Industrialised Future', leading projects and energy expert Greg Nott talks with Craig Sisterson about the growth of AEF and Africa's energy (r)evolution.

In our fast-moving modern world, energy lawyers need strategic nous and a holistic view of the society they operate in, rather than seeing themselves merely as technocrats or advisors who know their legal ABCs, says projects and energy sector expert Greg Nott, a director and Head of Africa at leading firm Deneys.

"We've got to have a holistic view of the way we go about our business, and a very keen interest in how we're developing our market, so we've got to be up to date not only on the law but society in general, and where things are going in terms of policy," he adds. "In countries such as South Africa, access to leaders, to influencers, to funders, to society as a whole helps the sponsor, the project developer, or the bank itself move and facilitate itself into a successful project."

While lawyers do need to deeply understand their 'beat', says Greg, at the same time they must be alive to many other issues that come into play. What are stakeholders saying? Can lawyers influence policy on behalf of stakeholders? What are new developments in financing, and how can they be applied to particular projects? Lawyers must be astute commentators on the foreground and background of energy in South Africa and the broader southern Africa region.

It's also important, adds Greg, to focus on the trends more than the headlines.

With almost four decades in legal practice, Greg has witnessed plenty of evolution in the African energy sector, alongside massive change in South Africa.

Millions of headlines. Some key trends.

AEF growth as a measuring stick

As Head of Africa and a Director in the Projects practice at Deneys, Greg advises on major energy sector transactions across the continent, from upstream oil and gas to solar and wind projects and South Africa's REIPPPP initiative (which mobilises billions of dollars for clean energy generation). Over his decades in practice, he's seen plenty of growth and change in South Africa and beyond.

"I've been going to the Africa Energy Forum for some twenty years now, and that really illustrates the energy trends in our country and in Africa as a whole," he shares ahead of this year's AEF event in Cape Town, themed 'Building Africa's Industrialised Future'. "In the very beginning we'd struggle to find or discuss any new projects that had actually closed. We'd talk about the same projects over and over, nothing really moved. There'd be a few hundred people in attendance, and few if any South African firms represented. Nowadays, AEF is a totally different story, and that's a reflection of the growth and importance of energy in the region and on the continent as a whole, plus all the good stories that come with it."

We've got to have a holistic view of the way we go about our business, and a very keen interest in how we're developing our market. The legal work is only one part of a much broader investment ecosystem.



It's important to focus on the trends more than the headlines. When you look at the long-term trajectory of the sector, a much more positive picture begins to emerge.

This month's AEF in Cape Town is expected to have several thousand attendees, with 600 young people taking part in practical workshops, over 230 expert speakers and 80 sessions, and more than 1,000 companies represented.

"Historically, energy in South Africa has been dominated by Eskom in generation and transmission," says Greg. "But that's changing, accelerated by reform and private sector participation. We've had some key policy milestones, with IRP in 2019 - which has shown a formal roadmap for diversification - helping enormously. We've had the removal of a 100MW licensing cap, and electricity regulation amendments which move us towards a more competitive market."

Investors looking at the South African energy market are now seeing a framework that's more conducive to consistent regulation and openness, says Greg, as well as massive, rapid growth in renewables and embedded generation thanks to a state-of-the-art renewables tender process that gives confidence to investors.

"At the end of the day, you're now seeing projects closed and completed all the time, which also generates a great sense of confidence," says Greg. "In future you're going to see a greater emphasis on transmission, and regional integration is becoming more relevant. All these trends are leading to a good headline, which shows energy sufficiency, and energy reliability, consistency, and affordability."



The headline is clear: energy is becoming more sufficient and reliable, while remaining affordable.



Greg Nott

I believe with the right amount of energy – and by that I mean political will and wherewithal, alongside electricity – you see all the exciting possibilities and say to yourself, what are the limits?

Multidisciplinary approach, positive outlook

Throughout his career, Greg has worked on highly impactful matters, from his earliest days representing political prisoners, exiles, and trade unions in the final throes of Apartheid and South Africa's transition to democracy, to spearheading significant African energy projects. In 2010, he was named International Lawyer of the Year by British magazine Legal Business, for his pro bono work and being a champion of human rights. He has been the lead lawyer for Olympic champion Caster Semenya throughout her long-standing legal battles with World Athletics.

Again and again, Greg has witnessed positive progress emerge from challenge, struggle, and change. Transformation is at the heart of modern South Africa.



At Deneys, he leads a talented, multidisciplinary projects and energy sector team that is helping shepherd the nation, and wider region, through a new energy era.

"I'm very proud of our team and the type of advice we've given over the years," says Greg, circling back to his holistic view of lawyers' roles in modern society.

"We have one of the most astute lawyers in South Africa, in terms of renewable energy, with Jackie Midlane, who has built around her a phenomenal team which has done some significant energy and renewables projects on the continent. In Cape Town we have Matthew Ash, our Head of Energy, who's made himself an expert in subjects like gas to power, battery energy storage, and other key trends. We've got rising stars like fellow directors CJ Grey, Ragemah Hendricks, and Malibuye Cossie, who've all grown up in the team. We're getting a groundswell of young lawyers coming through and staying for the long haul, so clients who turn to us get a consistency of advice and a lot of support, which is of great importance."

Looking ahead, Greg sees long-term trends of a transition to a fully competitive electricity market for South Africa, decarbonisation, and growing nuclear capacity.

Like the country has done as a whole, the South African and African energy markets are transforming for a new era. But, says Greg, such changes are about more than generating power and getting it from one point to another to be used.

"We've got to think more widely than just a narrow scope of what energy is," he says. "Energy is all encompassing. It's for communities. When you talk about bringing electricity and energy to the continent, you want to do it in the widest possible way you can to those who haven't got it, so we can uplift poverty, we uplift human rights, we uplift access to jobs, better living conditions, and so on."

Africa is the last frontier, says Greg, with passion in his voice. The last frontier that can really deliver in a geopolitical world seemingly in absolute chaos.

"We're not without our wars, or our difficulties, but I believe with the right amount of energy – and by that I mean political will and wherewithal, alongside electricity – you see all the exciting possibilities and say to yourself, what are the limits?"

Greg hopes that message will be conveyed at AEF 2026. A message of hope.

When deeds speak: harnessing law to strengthen South Africa's social fabric

In May, the Gauteng High Court heard a landmark constitutional law case regarding the treatment of newborn infants who are safely handed over through baby saver devices. Candice Pillay, Brent Botha, and Nicola Irving of Deneys talk with Craig Sisterson about the importance of public interest pro bono work.



Access to justice is fundamental and those who are most vulnerable in society must not be left without a voice, says Deneys CEO Brent Botha, as he spoke with Africa Legal about why the leading firm has invested more than 1,600 hours of internal legal work at no cost to Baby Savers South Africa NPO and Door of Hope Children's Mission NPO, the applicants in a significant constitutional law case.

"We believe that the true measure of our work lies not only in the outcomes we achieve for clients, but in the role we play in strengthening the social fabric of our country," adds Botha, noting the sustained investment the firm has made over many years, both via its dedicated Social Impact team and across the entire firm.

"We are immensely proud of our lawyers and staff who invest their time, expertise, and compassion into this work," adds Botha. "It is not ancillary to what we do - it is core to who we are."

That time, expertise, and compassion was on show in May, when a landmark constitutional hearing

was held before a full bench of the High Court in Pretoria, challenging the Department of Social Development's 2023 directive declaring life-saving baby saver mechanisms as illegal, and subsequent threats to cut funding to and close organisations who use them to provide safe relinquishment, on the basis such organisations were accomplices to criminal child abandonment.

I believe that 'service to others is the best work of life', and I feel fortunate to be a part of a firm that actively supports public interest law and recognises its role in strengthening the social fabric of South Africa.



Harnessing legal expertise to strengthen South Africa’s social fabric and create lasting change for vulnerable children, families and communities.

At Deneys we take up the challenge of giving a voice to the voiceless in representing and advising the most vulnerable in our communities and those who serve them.



Nicola Irving

The Social Impact team at Deneys - which currently consists of four directors, a senior associate, two associates, two paralegals, and candidate attorneys who rotate through the team - has been working on the case on a pro bono basis over the past few years, in concert with Advocates Garth Hulley SC, Leigh Franck, Gillian Benson, and Orapeleng Peter Tholo.

In 2024 they secured an interim court ruling, securing registration and funding for NPOs, and allowing them to continue using the baby saver devices, pending the outcome of the full constitutional challenge.

Pro bono work is the responsibility of every lawyer, says Candice Pillay, the firm’s Head of Social Impact Law. Important cases such as Baby Savers would not be possible without lawyers giving their time and expertise at no cost; the two NPOs here had no resources to fund constitutional litigation of this magnitude. “At Deneys we take up the challenge of giving a voice to the voiceless in representing and advising the most vulnerable in our communities and those who serve them.”

The case, says Deneys, raises fundamental questions about the right to life under section 11 of the Constitution, children’s rights under section 28, the State’s positive obligations under section 7(2), and the gendered impact of the criminalisation of abandonment on vulnerable women.

The strength of the applicants’ case is underscored by unprecedented support of four amici curiae – the Centre for Human Rights (University of Pretoria), the Centre for Child Law, the Women’s Legal Centre and The Deborahs 97:2 NPO – all of whom broadly support the applicants’ position.

“This case asks a fundamental question about the purpose of our law,” said Deborah Raduba of the Centre for Human Rights, the week of the court hearing. “Where a caregiver takes steps to ensure a child’s safety, the law should recognise that act for what it is. Protecting life cannot be treated as a crime. If the law fails to draw that distinction, it risks punishing vulnerability instead of protecting children.”

For Deneys, the constitutional law case is about saving lives. “Approximately 3,000 infants are unsafely abandoned in South Africa each year, and more than two-thirds do not survive. Baby Saver Boxes – simple, secure devices enabling the anonymous and safe relinquishment of infants – have saved approximately 580 infant lives to date. The second applicant, Door of Hope Children’s Mission NPO, alone has received and saved 286 babies through its Baby Saver Box since 1999.”

While all involved now await the High Court’s judgment, the Deneys team, led by Nicola Irving on this matter, says they are optimistic that a compelling case has been made out for both the constitutional and administrative law relief sought. If successful, this case will set a precedent for the legislative regulation of safe relinquishment in South Africa and, potentially, across the African continent.

“It is a privilege to use my legal skills to represent clients in important constitutional law and human rights cases such as this,” says Irving, a public interest lawyer and rising star who was recently promoted to Senior Associate.

We believe that the true measure of our work lies not only in the outcomes we achieve for clients, but in the role we play in strengthening the social fabric of our country.



Candice Pillay

“Many of our clients have been pushed into the margins of society by poverty and systemic inequality. Oftentimes, we are all they have, and the role we play extends far beyond that of legal advisor – we become, in many respects, part lawyer, part social worker and, at times, a trusted confidante and friend. That is a responsibility I do not take lightly.”

Irving says she is reminded daily of the weight and significance of pro bono work, particularly when vulnerable lives are at stake. In a deeply moving moment during the recent hearing, the legal team was visited by a member of Baby Savers South Africa NPO, who brought Baby N – a little girl safely relinquished through their Baby Saver Box just three months ago. She is a living testament to why this case matters.

“I hope to continue using the privilege of my training – and the mentorship I have received – to advocate for and protect the rights of those who might otherwise go unheard,” says Irving. “Ultimately, I believe that ‘service to others is the best work of life’, and I feel fortunate to be a part of a firm that actively supports public interest law and recognises its role in strengthening the social fabric of South Africa.”

What You Need to Know!

Drones and Insurance in South Africa

From spraying crops to fighting crime, drone technology usage has skyrocketed in South Africa, which was one of the first African nations to bring in proper drone laws. Paul Cartwright, Michael Homveld, and Jakop Mphofu of Deneys survey a fast-changing landscape and the insurance risks and gaps arising from more drones in the sky.

Drones are everywhere in South Africa these days. Whether it's farmers spraying crops, mining companies surveying land, or security firms keeping an eye on neighbourhoods, they've become a go-to tool across dozens of industries. As prices have dropped and the tech has improved, more and more people from hobbyists to big businesses are getting their hands on them.

But here's the thing: more drones in the sky means more accidents, more damage, and more insurance headaches. And South Africa's insurance needs to seize the opportunities.



The Rules

South Africa was one of the first African countries to bring in proper drone laws. The Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) sets the rules under something called Part 101. If you're flying a drone for business, you need to register it, get a certificate as an operator, and your pilot needs a licence, complete with exams and a medical check. Hobbyists flying smaller drones (under 7 kg) get off a bit easier, but there are still rules to follow and the flying restrictions are still stringent. You have to keep the drone in your line of sight, stay below 120 metres, and only fly during the day. No operating your drone near airports, prisons, police stations, or over crowds without special permission is permitted.

If you break these rules you could face fines or even criminal charges and crucially, your insurance might not pay out if something goes wrong during an illegal flight.

Where Things Get Tricky

The problem is that these regulations were written when drone tech was still in its early days. The SACAA knows they need updating especially around things like AI-controlled drones and flights beyond what the pilot can physically see, but the changes have been slow to come through. This creates a grey area. Operators can accidentally fall foul of the rules without even realising it, and that can have serious knock-on effects for their insurance cover.

South Africa was ahead of many countries in introducing drone regulations, but the industry has evolved dramatically since then. The challenge today is that the rules were written for a very different era of drone technology.



Many drone operators assume their existing business insurance will respond to an incident, but that is often not the case.

Without specialist cover, a single accident could leave an operator exposed to significant liability.



The Insurance Gap

Here's where it gets properly concerning. Many standard liability insurance policies in South Africa exclude damage to property arising from "aircraft", and drones are clearly defined as aircraft. Therefore, if your drone crashes into someone's property or injures a person, your regular business insurance might not cover you at all. Add into the mix the advancement and use of Artificial Intelligence into drone operations, and there could be various gaps in coverage. Some policies do offer limited drone cover, but it often comes with strict conditions, such as being fully compliant with every regulation at the time of the incident. Given how fast the rules and technology are changing, even a small, unintentional slip-up could void cover entirely.

For businesses that rely on drones, this is a serious blind spot. Specialist drone insurance does exist, typically covering third-party liability, damage to the drone itself, and sometimes attached equipment like cameras. But the market for it in South Africa is still quite small, with only a handful of providers offering these products.

South Africa's Unique Risks

Flying drones comes with its own set of challenges. Think extreme heat, high winds, dust, and vast remote areas. Add in the fact that drones often share airspace with crop dusters and helicopters near mines or game reserves, and the risk of mid-air collisions becomes real. Furthermore, given these harsh conditions the risk of technical failure remains high. There's also a privacy angle. Drones fitted with cameras for surveillance, common in anti-poaching and township security, must comply with South Africa's data protection law (POPIA). If operators collect personal information without following the rules, they could face regulatory action and civil claims, and most insurance policies don't cover data breaches.

What Needs to Happen

The bottom line is that the drone industry in South Africa is growing fast, but the regulations and insurance products haven't all kept pace. There's a real opportunity for insurers to step up and design products that properly reflect how drones are being used today. Until that happens, operators, whether commercial or casual, need to be very careful about what their insurance does and doesn't cover.



Shipping it: moving towards a brighter future for Africa

As global demand for Africa’s minerals surges, alongside rapid tech innovations, Andrew Robinson of Deneys believes the continent’s next great trade breakthrough may lie with something far less glamorous, but extremely critical: moving goods more efficiently.

Somewhere in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, copper begins a journey. Before it becomes part of a battery, power grid, or the device you’re reading this article on, it will travel overland through other African nations like Zambia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, before being loaded on a ship to Asia.

Backed-up border posts. Warehouses. Insurers. Financiers. Transport operators. Multiple legal systems, with roots in both civil and common law. That journey, says shipping and transport expert Andrew Robinson, a director at leading firm Deneys, epitomises the current complexities and challenges African trade.

Many global and local discussions about Africa’s future focus on the continent’s critical minerals riches, technological innovations, or its young dynamic population, but the future of African commerce, says Andrew, may depend not simply on what the continent produces, but on how effectively it moves it.

And there’s plenty of work still to be done there to help unlock Africa’s potential.

Before Africa can capture greater value from its mineral wealth, agricultural products, and other natural resources, build manufacturing capacity or realise the ambitions of AfCFTA, such goods must move; often across thousands of kilometres, crossing borders and legal systems, before reaching markets. Along the way that shipment of copper from the DRC will likely encounter bottlenecks, security risks, insurance complications, and regulatory complexities.

“Within Africa, the vast majority of goods are moved by road, and it’s a big problem,” says Andrew, one of Africa’s leading shipping and marine insurance lawyers. “It’s inefficient, destroys the roads, plus you get the biggest curse of being stuck at border controls. The queuing of the borders is an absolute nightmare. If you could truck your goods down without border stops it would take four or five days, but round trips are now taking up to 50 days.”

Beyond delays and inefficiencies, there are also massive complexities if something happens along the way, with rare experts such as Andrew and the Deneys admiralty, shipping, and transport team having to work out what laws apply where (unlike in Europe), there’s no regime that deals with how goods are to be moved through southern Africa and all the countries and risks there.

Andrew is in favour of creating a more integrated regional transport framework, possibly akin to a localised version of Europe’s longstanding CMR (a uniform legal framework for cross-border road freight across Europe), tailored to African needs.

Believe me, when something goes wrong, a ship runs aground, Malcolm can tell you what happened. He deeply understands ships and cargo.

“It would be an absolute game-changer,” he says. “Goods would move more securely, more quickly, more efficiently. That’s logistics, it’s about making sure I can get your goods from A to B as cheaply, efficiently, and safely as possible.”

He would also like to see an African coastal shipping line that moves goods around southern Africa, akin to the Jones Act in the United States, which mandates that all vessels transporting goods or passengers between US ports must be built and flagged in the US, owned by US citizens, and crewed by locals.

“That kind of cabotage is something that I think would work and be beneficial to the subcontinent,” adds Andrew, who unexpectedly fell in love with shipping and transport law while studying at the University of Cape Town in the early 1980s.

At Deneys, Andrew is part of a talented and highly experienced admiralty, shipping, and transport practice that also includes fellow directors Nick Veldman, Peter Lamb, and Carol Holness, and is led by consultant Malcolm Hartwell, who is a Master Mariner as well as Head of Admiralty, Shipping, and Transport for Africa. The Directors are supported by Senior Associate Nicholene Mazibuko, and associates Sonul Shanskreet, Mmathabo Lekalakala, and AI guru Francis Makkink. In addition, Deneys has a specialised ports regulatory team that includes Andrew, fellow director Ugen Odayarm and associate Adam Butler.

“We may be the only firm in Africa that has a Master Mariner as a senior lawyer,” says Andrew. “Believe me, when something goes wrong, a ship runs aground, Malcolm can tell you what happened. He deeply understands ships and cargo.”

With the complexities and layers of regulatory and practical risks for transport and shipping in Africa, it’s vital for businesses to have a ‘one stop shop’ where they can turn, and that is what the Deneys team provides, with its high-level expertise.

Like transport being the largely unseen architecture of continental trade – while a hugely vital factor – shipping and transport law is a critical area that can often seem overshadowed by other eye-catching practices. “It’s not quite the bridesmaid, but thereabouts,” chuckles Andrew. “People forget, but we love it, because every time we speak to our M&A people or our energy lawyers, we say ‘you’ve either got to bring it in, or ship it out’. Some aspect of what you’re doing requires something to be moved from A to B. Transport is so very important.”



Transport corridors across Africa, enabled by harmonised legal frameworks, could transform trade.



Andrew believes transport corridors across Africa supported by harmonised legal frameworks could transform trade across the continent. It’s not simply about logistics, but economic integration in the world’s largest free trade area. Legal certainty, Andrew argues, is every bit as important as roads, railways, and ports.

Deneys has deliberately built a team around the entire movement of goods, with four key pillars: commercial contracts, insurance, carriage, and finance. Their multidisciplinary team spans Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town and includes shipping litigators, logistics specialists, marine insurance experts, and commercial lawyers, alongside Hartwell’s rare blend of law and qualified master mariner.

“The joy of doing shipping law is that you meet the most interesting people,” shares Andrew, who admits that as a law student decades ago he wasn’t sure he wanted to practice law until he took a Carriage of Goods by Sea elective. “You get TED talks on steroids from absolute experts in their fields who can explain why something can burn, or go rotten, why a ship failed, or an engine cracked. It offers adventure, travel, excitement, brilliant people, and that academic part of law.”

Nowadays, however, Andrew’s focus is firmly on Africa’s future. For decades the continent’s economic story has often been told through what lies beneath the ground, whether oil and gas or minerals and metals. Increasingly, however, Africa’s success may depend not simply on what it possesses, but on how effectively it connects those resources to markets, industries, and consumers.

Before Africa can trade more, industrialise more or prosper more, it must move more. And that, Andrew believes, is where the real game change lies.



About Deneys

Deneys is a full-service law firm with a 100-year track record of firsts and a clear view of what's next. Africa-first with a global perspective, we help our clients navigate disputes, transactions and regulation with agility, insight, and pace – turning challenge and change into advantage. It means that in today's fast-moving world, as the world moves, we're moving with it, so you can too.

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