

# EXPORTER OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

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Special Projects, Independent Newspapers, Cape

## Six innovative companies are contending for this year's top prize

### The Cape Chamber of Commerce spokesperson

TWO former winners of the ABSA/Cape Chamber of Commerce Exporter of the Year competition and four exciting and innovative companies are contending for this year's top prize, which will be presented at a gala banquet in Cape Town on October 21.

The previous winners of the trophy that have entered again this year are:

Kelp Products of Simon's Town, which makes growth hormones or bio regulators for the agricultural industry in 55 countries; and

Petrel Engineering, which makes marine deck equipment for the fishing, shipping and oil industries.

The judges have described this year's entry as surprisingly strong, given the difficult financial circumstances prevailing in most countries.

Newcomers to the winners circle include:

AAT Composites, which designs and makes composite parts for aircraft interiors, especially the seats, and has been exporting 100% of its production to Europe and the US for nearly 20 years;

Econo-Heat, the manufacturers of wall panel heaters, is a first-time entrant but it is already exporting to 38 countries and its new Wetton factory has been designed to produce more than a million units a year;

T&B Log Homes of Knysna, which is now exporting up-market log homes to 28 countries, including the US, Australia, New Zealand and leading European countries; and

The firm Tenticle which has re-invented Bedouin tents, now produced in new stretch fabrics which were developed in South Africa and are available in a wide range of colours. The tents are used for private parties, corporate functions and major sporting events.

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Joe Emeran, president of the chamber, says the judges were surprised by the strength of this year's entry, especially in the engineering and manufacturing sector.

"We had entries from companies which would have made the finals in most other years but the field was just too strong for them this year."

He says that, "as usual" a feature of the entries was some outstanding innovation.

### AAT Composites

The Strand firm, AAT Composites, has been designing and making seat frames and other parts for aircraft interiors for more than 20 years and 100% of its production is exported to Europe and the United States.

Sias van der Westhuizen, CEO of the company, says its products are used in the first class and business sections of the airliners where demand for quality is high and production runs are relatively short. The composite products are strong but light in weight and are favoured where larger and more spacious fittings are required.

Economy class seat frames are made mainly in Asia in large volumes. South African companies have a great deal of difficulty competing in this price-sensitive section of the market, so AAT Composites has found a niche in the luxury end of the aircraft cabins.

Van der Westhuizen says the seat frames are not supplied to Boeing and Airbus but to airline seat manufacturers that are selected by the airlines to furnish the interiors of their aircraft to suit their own requirements. There is a good chance that if you have ever flown first or business class, your comfortable seat was made in Strand.

AAT composites also made seat frames for Concorde and, among its latest ventures, has been seats for a new generation of Zeppelin airships now being used to provide slower but more luxurious travel and spectacular scenic views from low altitude flights in Europe.

Contact Sias van der Westhuizen on 021 850 7000.

### Petrel Engineering

PETREL Engineering started life in the Bo-Kaap in 1947 as a small "jobbing shop" but it became involved in the fishing industry during the West Coast fishing boom in



NICHE IN LUXURY END: AAT Composite products are used in the first class and business sections of the airliners where demand for quality is high and production runs are relatively short.

the 1950s and has not looked back.

The company developed a range of marine deck equipment, from winches to cranes, to handle heavy nets and the experience gained in engineering for a hostile, corrosive environment has equipped the company to tackle almost any project anywhere.

It played a major role in constructing the Sanae IV Antarctic base and one of its latest projects has been the building of a barge launch and recovery system on remote island of Tristan da Cunha. Other projects have been for Iceland and South America.

It is now using its expertise to design and manufacture solutions for engineering challenges in fields which include off-shore oil, marine research, diving and subsea

industries. On land, it has tackled projects ranging from transport systems and refuse compacting equipment to industrial drying ovens and conveyor systems.

Sales manager Peter Coop says the company managed to do well during the difficult financial times because it was working on major projects which pre-dated the slump.

Petrel Engineering is now part of the Elgin Group, a Durban-based engineering business. It has a world-wide network of agents.

Contact Peter Coop on 021 534 2451.

### Econo-Heat

Established in 1990, South African-born Econo-Heat is the inventor and manufacturer of the original wall panel heaters. Over the past 20 years this trusted and celebrated energy-saver heater has provided warmth and winter comfort to many South Africans.

Econo-Heat's corporate mission has become "To be a world leader in energy efficient heating appliance markets" and the company now exports to 39 countries worldwide through its own international sales offices and through international distributors.

Econo-Heat's popular 400W whole room heater - the only SABS safety certified and approved heater - is the only South African wall panel heater that uses natural convection technology to evenly distribute heat.

It is rated by many as the world's most economical heater, saving up to 50% or more on heating costs, while giving a summer feel inside when it's winter outside.

The company has experienced exponential growth in the South African market over the past five years. Furthermore, Econo-Heat's strong focus on international markets has enabled the company to grow its export quantities to more than 60% of its total production.

The increased demand for the product has necessitated stepping up Econo-Heat's production capacity from the current 1 200 units a day to 5 000 units a day when the company moves to a new factory later this year.

As a lean manufacturer that is already delighting customers with its unique and innovating wall panel heater, Econo-Heat will soon be launching other new and exciting eco-friendly heating appliances in world markets where there is much demand for energy-efficient appliances to save on electricity and to reduce carbon footprints.

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BRIGHTS BIRCH'S CHECKERS HYPER CLICKS SOME MAKRO



ABOVE: Jorge Cea of ASMAR, Chile and Vincent Chetty, former MD of Petrel, conclude the deal to supply deck equipment.  
RIGHT: Furnace re-lining machine with laser camera, temperature sensing and gunning booms.



**FINALIST ABSA / CAPE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WESTERN CAPE EXPORTER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2010**

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**Did you know?**

The seat backrests for the BA Concorde were made in Cape Town?

**AAT Composites is a global player in the design and manufacture of lightweight composite components for aircraft seating.**

[www.aatcomposites.com](http://www.aatcomposites.com)

**AAT COMPOSITES**

**ORIGINAL: Econo-Heat's popular 400W whole room heater - the only SABS safety certified and approved heater - is the only South African wall panel heater that uses natural convection technology to evenly distribute heat.**

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