

**MEDIA RELEASE
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**MKRI CEO Welcomes Newly Appointed Board of Directors to Steer Research & innovation
for economic growth & development**



Top (Left to right): Prof. Langalibalele Felix Mathenjwa, Dr. Usha Roopnarain, Prof. Thokozani Nzimakwe
Bottom (Left to Right): Dr. Lorraine Thulisile Mwelase (Deputy Chairperson), Dr. Vusumuzi Joseph Mthembu (Chairperson), Dr. Thandeka Ellenson (CEO)

The Moses Kotane Research Institute (MKRI) has welcomed its newly appointed Board of Directors, ushering in a strengthened era of research excellence, innovation, and economic impact for KwaZulu-Natal.

The appointment signals a renewed commitment to positioning research and innovation at the centre of economic growth and development in the province. The MKRI CEO expressed confidence that the new Board's collective expertise will sharpen the Institute's strategic focus and expand its contribution to inclusive growth.

“We are honoured to welcome a Board whose combined experience in governance, engineering, academia, and development finance aligns perfectly with MKRI's mission. Their leadership will strengthen our ability to produce high-impact research and translate innovation into tangible economic outcomes for the province.”

The Board is chaired by Dr. Vusumuzi Joseph Mthembu, an experienced governance and public administration leader with a strong background in municipal oversight and financial accountability. His extensive experience in audit and performance governance structures will reinforce MKRI's institutional integrity and strategic direction.

Serving as Deputy Chairperson is Dr. Lorraine Thulisile Mwelase, a seasoned civil engineer and water management specialist. Her expertise in infrastructure planning, sustainable development, and development finance will add significant value to MKRI's applied research agenda, particularly in areas that link infrastructure innovation to economic expansion and service delivery improvement.

The Board is further strengthened by:

- **Dr. Usha Roopnarain**, an academic and governance professional with deep experience in higher education leadership and institutional strategy.
- **Prof. Thokozani Nzimakwe**, a respected scholar in public administration and institutional transformation.
- **Prof. Langalibalele Felix Mathenjwa**, an academic leader with strong expertise in science, research management, and innovation systems.

Collectively, the Board brings a powerful combination of governance acumen, scientific leadership, and development insight, critical elements for advancing a knowledge-driven economy.

As KwaZulu-Natal's leading research and policy advisory institute, MKRI plays a strategic role in conducting evidence-based research that informs government planning, strengthens entrepreneurship, advances Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and supports innovation ecosystems. The Institute's work directly contributes to economic development, investment attraction, skills development, and job creation.

Through strengthened partnerships with government, academia, industry, and communities, MKRI continues to translate research into practical solutions that address socio-economic challenges and unlock new growth opportunities.

"With this strengthened Board, MKRI is well-positioned to deepen its research impact and accelerate innovation-led development. Together, we will continue driving evidence-based solutions that support sustainable economic transformation in KwaZulu-Natal," concluded the CEO.

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