



AVE: R 7852.63



**BUSY BEES . . .**  
Trainees at the Hope Factory in North End receive training in sewing and pattern-making to give them the skills to become entrepreneurs or join the formal sector.  
Picture: JUDY DE VEGA

# Giving greater hope to the youth

**Lee-Anne Butler**  
butlerl@avusa.co.za

THE Hope Factory, an enterprise development initiative in Nelson Mandela Bay which empowers unemployed young people with entrepreneurial skills and mentorship, is expanding by introducing an incubator hub for past graduates.

The pioneering Eastern Cape training and entrepreneurship programme will launch its hub in October, but the organisers say they hope to have at least 10 to 15 entrepreneurs operating from the hub in Cawood Street, North End, before then. Of the 800 graduates from the job-creation pro-

gramme in the last three years, 76% are economically sustainable, either studying towards further qualifications or working in the formal sector. About 100 now run their own businesses, ranging from upholstery to baking and even designing traditional clothing.

"We are hoping to bring back 10 to 15 of our very best graduates who are on the verge of making it big with their businesses but who just need a little assistance or a push in the right direction," centre manager Maurita Odendaal said.

She said the hub would provide those graduates with a launch pad by giving them space

to operate from, specialist equipment, internet access, computers and printing facilities, telephones, mentorship and advice and bookkeeping services.

"Many of them are operating from their own homes and their clients are members of their community, but this will assist them in targeting a different market," Odendaal said.

The hub will comprise 20 offices, a communal work space, store room, computer centre and meeting rooms. It will also have a kitchen and canteen area, bathrooms, front of shop and a reception area. A graduate from last year's intake of trainees, Mbaso Mzili, 22, said the Hope Factory

had given him the skills he needed to start his decoupage business in the townships. "People really like my products, but my main clients are from Plettenberg Bay. I want to go to Plett and teach the youth there how to work with decoupage and share my skills as well," he said.

Odendaal said: "Successful applicants will have to sign an agreement with the Hope Factory and membership of three years, which will be renewed every six months. Those who are able to afford rental of their own office space before then will vacate to give someone else the opportunity."