

■ NAMESAKE

# Will the real Vino stand up?

*Verulam magistrate to decide if the same-name identity case goes to trial*

MERVYN NAIDOO

## WHAT'S in a name?

Apparently much for two Durban women, who have identical first names and surnames (Vinotha Govender) and owners of heavyweight construction companies.

The issues around the similarities and differences between the two blew up when the South African Construction Awards (SACA), believed to be the Oscars of the local construction industry, decided to name VINO Govender as their "Best Woman in Construction 2018".

That honour first went to VINO "Veez" Govender, 47, who lives in Glen Anil, at an event in Joburg during December.

Then, VINO Govender, 51, who lives in Newlands, received the award in February from the organisers, who allegedly told her that handing the award to "Veez" was a "human error".

The task of deciding who the real McCoy VINO Govender is now rests in the hands of Verulam magistrate Visha Naidoo.

Naidoo handled the matter briefly on Friday when VINO Govender of Newlands submitted her responding affidavit to the application for a harassment order, which was made by Veez, and represented by attorney Mervyn Maistry, earlier this month.

Naidoo adjourned the matter to November 15, when she is expected to announce whether the matter would go to trial or not.

In her application, Veez said it came to her attention that someone with the same name and surname as her was "posing as me" with achievements and awards.

"I was contacted by a 'VINO Govender' in March 2019 via Facebook messenger, informing me that I had received an award (from the SACA) that should have been given to her."

Veez said she enquired further about this person and allegedly found that VINO Govender was no longer in business, was not in the construction industry and did not apply to receive the award.

She said friends told her that "this



A court must decide who is the rightful recipient of the SA Construction Award. Should it go to Vinotha Govender from Glen Anil, left, or to Vinotha Govender of Newlands. | LEON LESTRADE Africa News Agency (ANA)

VINO Govender" was "mimicking" her profile.

Veez said: "She (VINO Govender) 'bullied' my profile and indicated that I am an employee of her business, LA Consulting Engineers, which is a misrepresentation as I am the MD of my company."

She alleged that VINO Govender had contacted various media houses and spread "fake news" about her.

"I am traumatised by this person and emotionally scared because I am not sure what this person is capable of," said Veez who has accumulated numerous construction related awards over the years.

She claimed that VINO Govender

wanted her to hand back the "benefits" of the award. Therefore, she felt her life was under threat.

Veez said she had worked hard to establish her brand and "outstanding reputation" in a male dominated industry, but the false allegations had caused her "reputational damage".

Apart from asking that VINO Govender be stopped from further harassing her, Veez requested that her namesake refrain from posting incorrect information and remove all such posts.

She also asked that the media desist from publishing incorrect info and issue an apology for previous articles.

In her response, which was prepared by attorney Rajesh Hiralall, VINO

Govender said that Veez had made allegations that she couldn't support.

"It seems like Veez wants the court to believe she is the only person bearing the name and surname VINOtha Govender and she was the only one doing business in the construction industry," said VINO Govender.

She said she was legally named VINOtha Govender and the director of two companies, South African Pest Eliminators and Hygiene Services and Aylish Trading CC, which were registered in 2002 and 2005 respectively.

Govender said she was invited by Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi to receive the SACA in February.

The recognition was for her

outstanding work as an entomologist who specialised in pest control related to the construction industry.

Some of the previous projects Govender worked on included the King Shaka Airport and the Galleria Shopping Mall.

Govender alleged that SACA chairperson Loyiso Ngavu told her the award was incorrectly given to Veez.

She insisted that there was no "identity fraud" as both she and Veez had the same name.

Govender confirmed that she communicated with Veez via WhatsApp to confirm that she was the rightful recipient of the award, which could be verified by SACA.