

# JCB fleet delivers longevity and performance for Mokawem's Plant Hire

**Jerome Mokawem doesn't like replacing machines in his plant hire fleet. He would rather nurture, repair and even rebuild machines to ensure their longevity but admits that this part of his business philosophy is made easier by the proven reliability of two strong brands within his fleet.**

Jerome, who originally hails from Dewetsdorp in the Free State, moved to East London to learn the ropes of the plant hire business, eventually running the Transkei region for his employer. He admits it was a tough environment, but he learnt a lot about people, machines and above all, that what makes a business sustainable which fired his eagerness to be self-employed.

And so, in the year 2000, Mokawem's Plant Hire saw the light of day in East London with one tractor backhoe loader (TLB) in its fleet. "Our target market was anyone who needed a TLB at any time and almost any place," Jerome recalls. "By the time our one machine was relatively busy, I borrowed money from my father and bought two more TLBs and those were soon generating a steady income for us as well."

"Ours were the first machines used to de-bush and create space for roads in the area which is now the East London Industrial Development Zone. We also discovered the reliability that JCB Backhoe Loaders provided and, changing to this brand, we grew our fleet steadily until it numbered 15."

According to Jerome, the local plant hire market became flooded with especially TLBs in the mid-teens of the 2000s, forcing down prices and making it unsustainable. A change to his own business model was needed.

"I saw signs of a radically changing market and to counter this I bought two rigid 10-cubic metre tipper trucks and a JCB JS200 20-ton Excavator to load these trucks," Jerome says.



**From left: Mokawem's Plant Hire Manager, Eldred Stap, with the company's owner, Jerome Mokawem and Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Anthony Enslin, standing in front of a Bell B17B ADT.**

"We also made a change to the smaller end of the plant hire market with the acquisition of JCB 135HD and 155HD Skid Steer Loaders, which have proved very successful for us."

It's interesting to note that while the company's JCB 3CX and 3DX Backhoe Loaders are still popular, it's in the smaller and larger ends of the plant hire market that Mokawem's Plant Hire seems to have hit 'pay dirt', as Jerome explains:

"To complement our JCB Skid Steers we bought two JCB 1CX Backhoe Loaders and these we almost never see in our yard, such is their popularity for a wide variety of applications especially on the construction sites on the seafloor, which can be constrained in terms of space." A JCB 406ZX Wheel Loader with a quick-release bucket and fork option was added in 2018 and is also extremely popular.

"On the larger machine end we've had such good returns from our JCB JS200 Excavator that we've added two newer JCB JS205 Excavators to this fleet and have increased our 10-cubic metre tipper truck fleet to 10," Jerome adds. "We have three older Bell B17B Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs), which were bought used. One has been converted into a water tanker and we get to hire them out for rough terrains and sites that are accessible by road as they are road legal. Even with their 40 000-plus hours, they still motor on."

Jerome is keen to point out that they aim to get the maximum longevity and performance out of any machine they buy, whether it is new or used and this is done by training their operators well and applying diligent preventative maintenance, timeous repair and well-planned rebuilds. Each machine's entire service and repair history is on file.

Mokawem's Plant Hire has its own lowbed for transporting its equipment to various sites. It is also used when equipment needs maintenance or repair and ensures that the equipment reaches suppliers such as Bell Equipment or their own workshops quickly, which minimises downtime.

"Quality of design and build are huge factors and in the 15 years that we've bought JCB equipment, we've only experienced one engine failure, which we regard as a wonderful record," he says. "That is why we were so happy to hear that a strong brand such as Bell Equipment is now the official distributor of yet another strong brand in JCB, one we've trusted for years. In addition, this means that we can continue the long working relationship we've had with Anthony Enslin, Bell Equipment's Sales Representative, who knows our business and advises us appropriately."

Mokawem's Plant Hire's machines can be found across the Eastern Cape Province, extending from the company's base in East London to Mthatha, Aliwal-North, Queenstown and as far south as Port Elizabeth.

