



Lara Bezuidenhout
FASKEN

Partner



FASKEN

Q *What are the biggest energy deals you have worked on?*

A Within the field of energy finance, I was the co-lead partner, acting as lender's legal advisor, on the project financing of the IPP Peaking Power Plants at Avon and Dedisa from the early 2000's to 2014. These two projects were ground-breaking, first of kind IPP's in South Africa and this set the path to our team advising on IPP's in the Renewable Energy industry. I have advised lenders in numerous projects on successive rounds of the South African REIPPPP (Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme) and on other energy projects.

The skill and know-how brought to these energy projects was informed by the core principles of project finance in the infrastructure and PPA space that the Fasken, Johannesburg team has been building over the past 25 years. This all formed the perfect basis from which to launch the ground-breaking work our team did, acting for the Lenders on all aspects relating to the financing of two 100 MW solar PV wheeled energy projects, situated in the North West Province, developed by vertically integrated independent power producer, SOLA Group. These two projects were the first renewable energy projects to reach financial close pursuant to the regulatory change in August 2021 to raise the licensing limit for distributed generation projects from 1 MW to 100 MW. There have been and continue to be, many important and exciting legal developments in the energy space in South Africa, especially as we are seeing the market liberalise.

Q *Do you think this area of expertise requires any special attributes and if so, what would you say they are?*

A Advising on Energy Project Finance transactions requires an uncommon mix of attention to detail and an ability to appreciate and

understand the 'big picture', and to always keep in mind the many pieces of the puzzle. It requires an attentive but practical approach. Having an open mindset and believing in the impossible helps too.

Q *Do you find this area of expertise to be an exciting field and if so, why?*

A It is very exciting to be playing a part in creating solutions for future access to electricity in South Africa, often in new and creative ways.

Q *What are notable changes in your practice, the energy industry and South Africa and Africa worth highlighting?*

A Deregulation and de-carbonisation of the electricity sector.

Q *Can you share any experience of working on projects in Africa and navigating the unknown?*

A In the end it is always about our clients and assisting them with solving problems and accomplishing their goals, and that is the best part for me.

Q *What is your leadership style?*

A Respectful, intentional, collegial.

Q *What advice would you give others who are growing in their careers?*

A Set your sights on where you want to be but be realistic and be kind to yourself. Be persistent - things that are worthwhile take time and they take some flexibility. Embrace learning and read widely – from novels to journals and textbooks to the news and current affairs.

Q *Do you have any hobbies?*

A I spend as much time as I am able to with my family. I read and I garden. ♻️

