



Bicycling Empowerment Network (BEN)



ANNUAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2020 - AUGUST 2021





Bicycling Empowerment Network

General Manager's Annual Report

9 December 2021

Overview

The 2020/21 financial year has been another extraordinary year for humanity and for BEN. Covid-19 continues to impact on and shape our world, and the way in which we influence and change it. Tragically, Tony Florence, our beloved program manager, passed away after a tough struggle with the effects of the Virus. This has had a devastating impact on the organisation and he will be greatly missed. This annual report is dedicated to him and his legacy.

Covid-19 has had a major impact on the way we conduct our work at BEN. In some ways, the pandemic has taught us to really focus our interventions for maximum impact, whilst ensuring we do so in a safe and responsible manner. Many of our larger programmes have had to be adjusted to deal with the new realities that have come with this pandemic. For example, our bicycle distribution efforts with the Western Cape Department of Transport and Public Works (DoT) have been tweaked to ensure that the bulk of our distributions are helping to ease the burden brought about by the virus. Similarly the work that we have done in association with Qhubeka Charity and the ASO in terms of growing and supporting cycling in Khayelisha and other township areas has also had a big impact in terms of supporting recovery efforts required as the pandemic has negatively impacted on livelihoods.

One of the silver linings of the pandemic has been the extent to which like-minded organisations and individuals have rallied together to form a joint, powerful response that is agile, inclusive, strategic and relevant. This is particularly evident in the case of Langa, where we have seen the emergence of an authentic cycling township driven by the combined efforts of a multitude of different players, all contributing in their own way in a coherent, programmatic approach. From BEN's perspective, this is a pleasing dynamic as we have always recognized the value of effective partnerships and it is rewarding seeing this working when it really counts. The emergence of viable, sustainable township economies has been an ongoing vision of Tony Florence and it is fitting that this is really beginning to materialize as we mourn his passing.



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About Ben

BEN's overall impact mandate is to facilitate access to social and economic opportunity through bicycles and cycling.

This impact mandate is given expression through a number of intervention activity streams including:

- Access to Bicycles - Supply of affordable bicycles to disadvantaged communities,
- Enterprise Development and Support
- Economic Empowerment and SMME Support – and the promotion of Cycling Townships,
- Safe Cycling Training - Foster safe cycling practices,
- Training and skills development/transfer - Formal capacity development of township and project based mechanics,
- Policy and advocacy – Growing cycling and contributing to stronger NMT policy and practice.

Our intervention logic, or theory of change is heavily dependent on working in partnership and collaborating with a wide range of like-minded organisations and individuals.

The following sections summarise some of our activities and achievements under each of these impact activity streams.



...BEN has had a good year in terms of facilitating access and distributing bicycles...



Access to bicycles

Despite the many logistical and supply challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the supply of donated, used bikes as well as on the supply of the Bike4All, BEN has had a good year in terms of facilitating access and distributing bicycles to our empowerment centres, other township based entrepreneurs, and the various projects we support and partner with.

Thanks to an ever-strengthening relationship with Re-Cycle in the UK, we have managed to ensure a reliable and predictable flow of used bikes, although with disruptions to global shipping, we are finding that the landed costs of both used and new bicycles increased significantly during the course of the year. Over the year, we have also strengthened our strategic partnership with Tools for Work in the Netherlands and expect further shipments of bicycles from them in the coming years.

In terms of new bicycles, during the course of the year, BEN in partnership with PPA and Qhubeka via the Bicycle Mobility Consortium (BMC) and in association with the Western Cape Department of Transport and Public Works (DoT) distributed 800 new bicycles across various projects and programmes in the Western Cape as part of the Provincial Sustainable Transport Programme (PSTP). These bicycles have been used in the following areas:

- Scholar mobility,
- Community safety initiatives such as neighbourhood watches and Community Policing Forums (CPFs),
- Small, Medium and Micro-Enterprise (SMME) support initiative,
- Worker mobility,
- Food and medicine delivery,
- Covid-19 recovery initiatives,
- Etc.

In addition to this, BEN played an implementation role in the programming of 500 bicycles in association with Qhubeka Charity and Amaury Sports Organisation (ASO) primarily in the Khayelitsha area via Khaltsha Cycles.

Social enterprise development

Over the past number of years, BEN has been working hard at broadening our support reach in terms of empowering and capacitating social enterprise initiatives. We continue to support and enjoy a strong relationship with our network of Bicycle Empowerment Centres (BECs). However, over the past couple of years, our support envelope has been broadened to include a much wider range of cycling enterprises and initiatives. Currently we offer support to approximately 40 such organisations across the province.



Our support envelope includes:

- Facilitating access to bicycles,
- Access to training and skills transfer opportunities,
- SMME training and advice,
- Advice of governance and compliance (registrations, SARS, police clearance etc.),
- Advice on targeting opportunity areas,
- Facilitating meaningful partnerships,
- Etc.

Over the course of the year under review, we have observed, and been party to collaborative partnerships aimed at saturating particular areas with related but distinct intervention efforts. In these instances, the combined efforts of a range of organisations is starting to result in a concentration of effort which in turn is starting to fundamentally shift and change these areas. Langa is a case in point, where we are starting to see the emergence of a true cycling township, driven by a wide range of cycling related activities and initiatives. Similar dynamics are beginning to become evident in areas such as Khayelitsha and the Masiphumelele/Ocean View area.

Training and skills transfer

One of the key areas that Tony Florence was working on before his passing was on formalizing our Mechanic Training Programme. BEN's training programmes have always been held in high regard, but being self-accredited, lack the universal recognition and portability of formally accredited programmes. Towards this end, BEN has been actively working with a range of role-players to ensure that our programmes are properly recognized in the training sphere in the future. Key relationship that have been established and strengthened over the year include:

- Dr Florus Prinsloo (a consultant previously involved in building the national qualification framework),
- The Wholesale and Retail SETA (both Nationally and Provincially),
- The Western Cape Department of Economic Opportunities (DEDAT),
- Community Education and Training (The Community College Sector),
- False Bay College - Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College.

Clearly Tony's departure has meant that we need to be careful not to lose the momentum we have managed to build up. Towards this end, Dr Prinsloo has agreed to assist us move forward on a consultancy basis.

Despite the fact that Solly Jones, our senior mechanic/trainer of many years, retired early in the financial year, we have managed to have a busy year in terms of mechanical training. During the course of the year we offered our full programme to a Naval Retiree, spent a week at Orion Mine in Prieska training 8 community



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mechanics, and have completed many short one to five day training programmes from our facilities in Marina-da-Gama. Jason Kapank, our workshop co-ordinator, has managed the bulk of this training on his own, and where more specialized training skills are required, we have commissioned these skills in.

Safety Training

Safe cycling has always been a key element of the work that BEN does. We aim to ensure that every beneficiary of a bicycle is properly trained before they receive their bicycle. Covid-19 has had an impact on how we roll this training out. Prior to the pandemic, this training would be done in small groups or on a one-on-one basis. With restrictions on groups and the need for social distancing, we have had to adjust our safe cycling training delivery. Towards this end, we have developed video resources that we use as an alternative to the face-to-face approach. Our range of 'Cool Kid on a Bike' safety materials still forms the content backbone of our training efforts, but these are now supplemented with safe cycling videos that beneficiaries can watch and engage with safely instead of meeting directly.

We have also taken an expansive, generous view on our Intellectual Property (IP) and allow and encourage third party organisations and individual to use the content that we developed to support their own programmes, thereby indirectly expanding our safety training reach.

Advocacy

Over the past three years, our relationship with the provincial department of transport has strengthened significantly, to the point where we enjoy a very close working relationship on the PSTP and consider ourselves trusted advisors on cycling mobility issues. We are coming to the tail end of our initial contract to supply and programme bicycles into the PSTP, and all indications are that this arrangement will be renegotiated and extended and will continue into the future.



BEN's relationship with the City of Cape Town has also been strengthening over time. Indeed, one silver lining of the Covid-19 pandemic is that, as we have moved to virtual meetings, this has resulted in much better access to the City and its officials. While we remain somewhat frustrated by the City's lethargy in terms of pushing the cycling mobility agenda, we do find ourselves more fundamentally involved in some of their key mobility related processes and initiatives, notably in their Integrated Transport Programme (ITP) sub-committee. Our relationship with Theuns Kock, a key mobility official, also remains very strong and during Mobility Month, we collaborated on an infrastructure related advocacy video with the City which has been widely distributed.

BEN adopts a broad view of advocacy, recognizing that in order to grow cycling and unlock the benefits of this growth, we need to adopt a multi-pronged approach to advocacy. This goes beyond engaging with planning and engineering officials and infrastructure related processes and includes all activities that could contribute to the growth of the sector. The diversity of these activities often means that many different organisations are involved in supporting initiatives in an area. A good case in point for the year under review is Langa, where a great deal of cycling related advocacy work has been done by a wide range of organisations and individuals. This concentration of effort has really borne fruit in the area, and the organic growth of cycling in the area has been profound. BEN has recently completed an 'Imagine Langa' advocacy video illustrating the work that has been done recently and the possibilities going



into the future. BEN has played a significant coordinating role in Langa and we are incredibly proud to have contributed to this momentum and developmental energy.

A significant development in the advocacy space has been PPA's strategic decision to begin focusing more on advocacy work and less on events going into the future. While it is not yet clear where the emphasis of this advocacy drive will be, and with PPA entering a third year without a CEO, it is important for BEN to strategically position itself to effectively partner with and influence PPA in this area. We are hopeful that a new PPA CEO will be appointed soon, so that we can begin talks around how our relationship can be strengthened to maximise our joint advocacy efforts.

Staffing and restructuring

During the year under review, BEN experienced significant events that impact on staffing. In March 2021, BEN held a series of internal strategy meetings where we committed to refining and implementing our Cycling Townships Advocacy Model. We also committed to the process of ensuring that our training efforts are accredited and formally recognized. Both these shifts have resourcing and staffing implications.

In December 2020, Solly Jones formally retired from BEN after a long, dedicated career with us as our chief mechanic and training officer.



Furthermore, BEN has been severely affected by COVID-19 and on 18 September 2021 we tragically lost Tony Florence after a long battle with the disease. Tony was key to some of the strategic shifts that we had planned and started implementing, and his passing triggers the need to address the gaps left by his absence.

In addition to this, BEN is facing resourcing constraints due, in part, to changes in the circumstances of some of our core funders, and also due to a significant resource pinch in the donor community generally.

Each of these three dynamics effectively triggered the need for BEN to embark on a formal restructuring/review process that includes a review of our operational staffing needs, a possible redefinition of key roles and responsibilities, and potential restructuring and possible changes to conditions of service. This restructuring is currently underway.

Financial Position

As was the case in 2020, 2021 has been a difficult year for all sectors, including the NPO environment. Once again, BEN has done relatively well at weathering the storm and has had an impactful and successful year.

Continuing the trend that we observed in 2020, this year once again saw a significant change in the composition of the funding dynamics of the organisation. Revenue from grants and donations is significantly down from the previous year, while income generated from project activities is notably higher. This is due, in part, to the doubling up of the PSTP work in response to Covid-19 hotspot support work, and in part to us playing a major role in the supply and implementation of the Qhubeka/ASO Heroes on Bikes initiative, which saw us programming an additional 500 bicycles in the province. Despite this increase in project activity, we were able to hold down our cost of sales. The net effect of all this, is that we were able to generate a modest surplus of R161K for the year.



BICYCLING EMPOWERMENT NETWORK

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

1 SEPTEMBER 2020 - 31 AUGUST 2021

Figures in R	2021	2020
Gross revenue		
Sales	385,800	451,706
Grants and donations	123,948	2,094,932
Project income	4,748,535	1,213,234
	5,258,283	3,759,872
Cost of sales	229,394	296,815
Gross income	5,028,889	3,463,057
Other income		
Interest received	64,382	113,493
Profit on sale of property, plant and equipment	13,391	1,497
Recoveries	1,777	22,658
Sundry Income	5,060	
	84,610	137,648
	5,113,499	3,600,705
Operating expenditure	858,878	864,040
Net operating income before project expenditure	4,254,621	2,736,665
Project expenditure	4,092,712	2,172,303
Surplus for the year	161,909	564,362

comprehensive income

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AS AT 31 AUGUST 2021

Figures in R	2021	2020
Assets		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	9,817	16,587
Current assets		
Inventories	22,512	55,037
Trade & other receivables	276,288	214,717
Cash	2,036,667	3,273,458
	2,335,467	3,543,212
Total assets	2,345,284	3,559,799
Equity & liabilities		
Equity		
Other components of equity		800,000
Retained earnings	2,137,972	1,176,063
	2,137,972	1,976,063
Current liabilities		
Income received in advance	-	1,354,674
Trade and other payables	207,312	229,062
	207,312	1,583,736
Total equity and liabilities	2,345,284	3,559,799

financial position

Partnerships and Collaboration

Strategic and operational partnerships remain at the heart of BEN's success. We are a small organisation with a relatively large impact footprint, thanks in part to this deliberately lean approach.

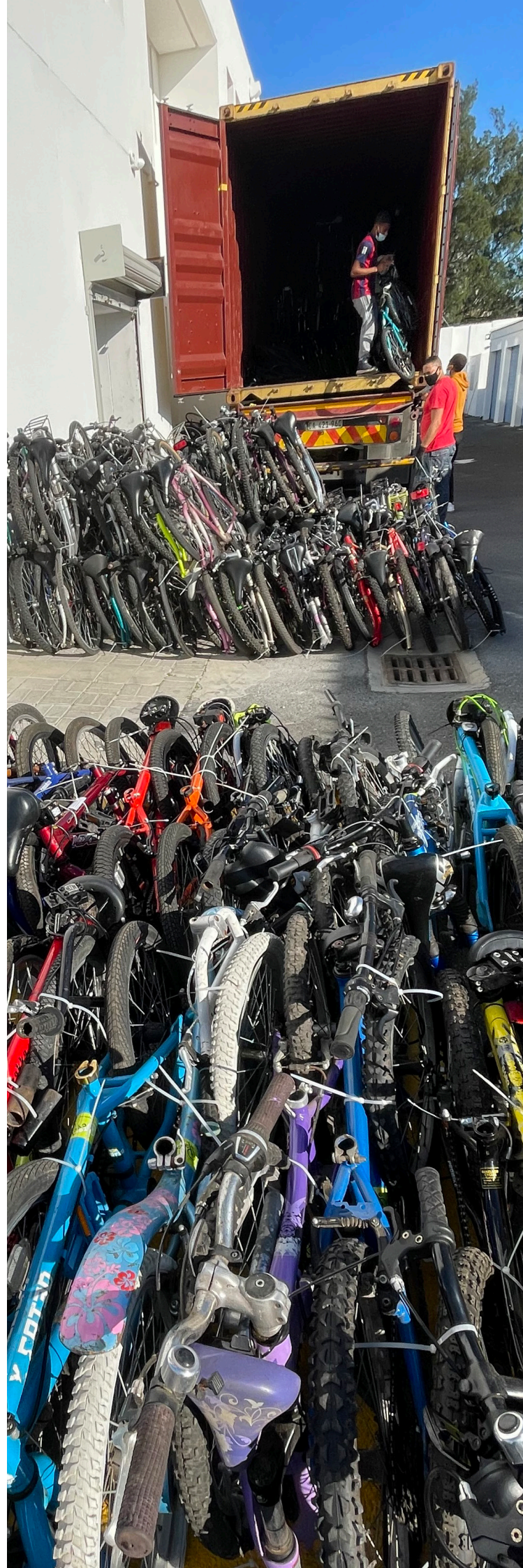
PPA remains BEN's key partner, and once again we have had a good year working together. The work on the PSTP programme has been particularly impactful, with our client finding additional resources to effectively double up on the planned number of bikes distributed in order to support Covid-19 recovery efforts. Our joint 'Cool Kid on a Bike' safety initiative has also enjoyed success over the year, although we had to pivot somewhat to adjust our approach due to social distance concerns in the delivery of the programme.

After struggling in 2020, Qhubeka Charity seems to be finding their feet and rhythm again. Once again, we have worked well with them this year. Our implementation work for them on the ASO 'Heroes on Bikes' project went well this year and made a big contribution to our income for the year.

In 2021, we were able to build on some of the preliminary work that we did with Orion Mine in Prieska. During the course of the year we sent a team up to Prieska to assist with mechanic training and to advise them on the establishment of their bicycle facility there. We are well positioned to play an even bigger role in the coming year.



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As mentioned earlier in this report, we also had a good collaborative year in our engagement with both the City of Cape Town and with the Provincial Department of Transport.

Our ongoing relationship with organisations such as Open Streets, Khaltsha Cycles, the Langa Bicycle Hub, and many others continues to be strong and healthy.

Strategic Focus going forward

BEN prides itself in regularly reviewing its strategy and approach with a view to ongoing improvement and refinement. Our work is based on a dynamic Theory of Change and monitoring and evaluation framework that helps to shape our strategic direction. In addition to our ongoing programme of work, the organization has identified the following areas that require a particular focus in the year going forward:

Restructuring

As indicated earlier in this report, our strategic planning, changes to our staffing, and increasing financial pressure have triggered the need to review and potentially restructure human resources within the organisation. This process is ongoing and will be finalized by the end of 2021.

Continued evolution of our social enterprise development model

BEN is well known for its enterprise development model and network of Bicycle Empowerment Centres (BECs). Over the past few years we have focused on expanding our support envelope to a wider range of community bicycle initiatives. BEN has been actively engaging with other community mechanics across the province with a view to providing support services to them. Towards this end, BEN has developed and refined a new model of support for community bicycle initiatives. The model is based on developing a strong understanding of the dynamics of each enterprise using a multi-criteria approach – this enables the organisation to be more targeted and tailored in terms of its support offering to community SMMEs and bicycling focused

entrepreneurs. This approach, which we began implementing in 2020, has been bedded down and improved in 2021.

Moving towards formal accredited training

Over the past few years, Tony Florence has been working on the process of getting formal accreditation for our training programmes. BEN is one of the few organisations in the country offering comprehensive bicycle mechanic training. While we currently certify our training internally, we are working hard to integrate our training efforts into the recognized skills qualification mainstream. BEN, working closely with Dr Florus Prinsloo is currently engaging with the relevant qualification authorities and SETAs, and has had a number of engagements with the Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDAT) with a view to developing mechanisms to offer accredited training in an apprenticeship model. We have also engaged with the Community College and TVET sectors with a view to working collaboratively in the future. In the 2021 year, we made significant progress in terms of working with key players to set this up. Progress towards this end has been somewhat interrupted by the passing of Tony in September but we have made arrangements to contract Dr Prinsloo to assist us with the process to ensure that the momentum we have developed is not lost.

Continued emphasis on strategic and functional partnerships

As has been the case in recent years, an ongoing focus will be the maintenance and strengthening of our key strategic partnerships. Both the BEN/PPA partnership and the three-way Qhubeka/PPA/BEN collaboration require ongoing maintenance and the ongoing evolution of memoranda of understanding (MOUs). As was the case in 2020, both PPA and Qhubeka continue facing fundamental challenges, and BEN needs to be vigilant and alert to any possible impact and opportunities that changes in these organisations may have.

Continually improving M&E Capability

A dynamic Theory of Change guides our work and forms the basic core of our M&E efforts. Over the past two years, much of our intervention work has become more focused given the need to respond to the Covid-19 recovery efforts. This has also had the effect of us streamlining our M&E activities in relation to these distributions. We are now in a much better position to track the sustainability and impact of our distributions, while also monitoring the ongoing condition and maintenance of the bicycles distributed. During 2021, we have worked closely with one of our key suppliers, Re-Cycle, to improve on collecting impact narratives by tracking and tracing a sample of the bicycles that we receive from them. This has mutual benefit to both our organisations, and we will continue to improve and evolve in this regard.

Ensuring BEN's sustainability

As economic conditions continue to be impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, most NGOs and PBOs find themselves under continued financial pressure. While we have done well over the past two years in piloting BEN through troubled waters from a financial perspective, our contingency reserves have been denuded over this time. While we have improved our income generating capability significantly, we are under no illusions as to the difficulties ahead. We will need to be prudent, vigilant and agile in order to make the most of what is likely to be a relatively constrained set of funding opportunities. In the context of a shrinking pool of effective donors, we are going to need to work very actively on securing financial resources over the coming year.

How can you help?

Volunteer

Become a volunteer. BEN often is in need of assistance of volunteers who can assist us with:

- Bicycle repair/maintenance
- Unpacking and sorting of donated bicycles
- Fundraising, marketing, social media or admin
- Events
- Administration

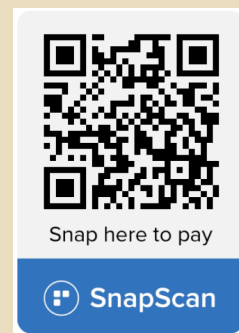
Donate bicycles & Equipment

- Used Bicycles
- Helmets & Reflective Safety Equipment
- Cycling Clothing & Shoes
- Bicycle Tools & Spares
- Bicycle Trailers & Attachments

Donations can be delivered to our office or you can contact us for arrange for collection

Financial donations

For ease of convenience you can donate via Snapscan using the following QR code:



Alternatively you can make a donation or set up a recurring gift using the banking details below:

Bicycling Empowerment Network

First National Bank
Branch 200409, Tokai
Current Account: 6203 4204 082
Swift Code: FIRNZAJJ

If you require an 18A Certificate to allow you to claim donation tax benefits, kindly contact the office directly.



“Give a man a fish and feed him for
a day. Teach a man to fish and feed
him for a lifetime. Teach a man to
cycle and he will realise fishing is
stupid and boring”

Desmond Tutu



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