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Nelson Mandela's prison guard: Kindness can change Australia ahead of Corporate Kindness Awards

Nelson Mandela's former prison guard and confidante has a message for Australian bosses to help their workers during Covid-19.



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Christo Brand and Nelson Mandela became friends during the revolutionary leader's time in maximum security prison in the 70s and 80s.

Exclusive: A prison warden who guarded Nelson Mandela and went on to become a close confidante of the anti-apartheid revolutionary is urging corporate Australia to exercise kindness.

Christo Brand watched over the former South African president during his time at the Robben Island and Pollsmoor maximum security prisons during the 1970s and 80s.

Mr Brand later went on to work as an administrative and logistics manager in the Constitutional Assembly under Mandela's rule.

The co-author of *Doing Life with Mandela: My Prisoner, My Friend* will be a guest speaker at the Corporate Kindness Conference & Awards which will take place on July 3 in Sydney.

Mr Brand said leaders can make a big difference by showing kindness to their staff and customers, the community and the environment.



Christo Brand became a confidante of Nelson Mandela in and outside prison. Picture: Supplied.

“Leaders can be kind to people, listen to people, reach out to people, help people,” Mr Brand said from South Africa.

“It is so important that we have programs available to teach people how to be kinder human beings and reward those that are kind to each other, to the planet and the people.”

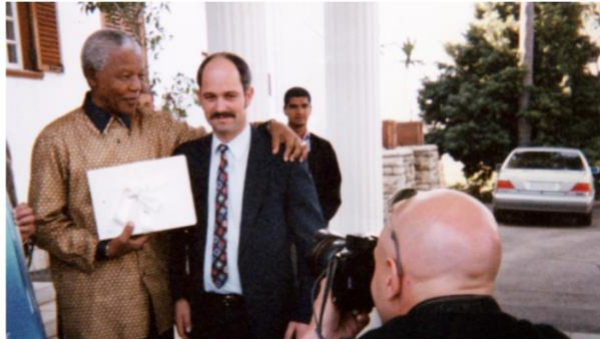
Mr Brand was just 19 when he first came face-to-face with Mandela, who was then 60.

The men sealed their friendship when Mr Brand smuggled Mandela’s newborn grandchild into the prison during a visit by Mandela’s wife Winnie.

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“When I smuggled this baby for Mandela, his grandchild from his daughter Zenani, and I see him touch this baby, that kindness in his face to thank me, to hold this baby with tears and emotion, and when I started reading the background of Mandela, then I realised what this old man fights for, he fights for equality for everybody in South Africa, that changed my entire mind and I became friends with Mandela,” he said.



Brand went on to work with Mandela when he was president of South Africa. Picture: Supplied.

Mandela was not a person “which stands out like a God in prison”, Mr Brand said. He regularly used his background as a lawyer to give advice to inmates.

He remained humble even when he went on to become president of South Africa.

“When Mandela walked into the gardens of parliament and the workers disappeared he immediately called security and said ‘call all my workers who work in this garden’; they were so worried they were in trouble,” Mr Brand said.

“And Mandela said, ‘I want to thank you for the good you are doing and every time you walk in here I am going to see you and I want to thank you. I want to know you and I want to know how you and your family are and if you are still happy’, and that gives morale to the people.”



Brand is a keynote speaker at the Corporate Kindness Conference and Awards. Picture: Supplied.

Anna Sheppard is the founder and CEO of Bambuddha Group which is hosting the awards. Her work with The Corporate Kindness Project, an Australian-based research study, focuses on the business benefits of “working kind”.

She believes the way in which companies can act kinder is to put people first in every interaction, being aware of the effect on community, customers, people and environment; and thinking about how products and services can make a positive impact.

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“Operating with a social conscience and using ethical practices are now the most highly valued assets a business can have in the eyes of the consumer,” Ms Sheppard said.
[Nominations for the 2021 Corporate Kindness Awards closes on June 7. For more information and to nominate, go online here.](#)



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