

THE LAUNCH OF THE LIBRARY WEEK 2014 GOES FULL SWING AHEAD

17 March 2014

The launch of the DPW 2014 National Library Week went full-steam ahead on 17 March 2014 as Deputy Minister Jeremy Cronin delivered his keynote address and declared the campaign officially opened. This announcement was accompanied by a thunderous applause from the house to mark the official start of the Library Week activities.

According to Ms Anbigay Naicker, Acting Chief Director: Strategic Management Unit (SMU), this year's campaign with the theme: ***Celebrating Libraries in 20 Years of Democracy: Check in @ Your Library***, is aimed at celebrating our country's intellectual and literary heritage of the past 20 years and to promote the right to freedom of access to information.

The campaign is also aimed at highlighting the value of libraries in the development of the nation's intellectual capacity, which in turn instils the culture of reading in order to create an informed nation.

The campaign also showcases libraries as desired spaces for connecting people to reach each other, and provide learning resources. Libraries connect communities, government, to the world and its environment. It positions the library as a one-stop-shop for information at all times.

In his keynote address, Public Works Deputy Minister Jeremy Cronin remarked: "Our library is our institutional memory along with many of you who have been in the Department of Public Works for some time now. Without a good system, most of the DPW institutional memory gets lost. With the coming and going of Ministers and Directors-General (DGs), DPW is losing most of its corporate memory. This is where Librarians must come in, put systems in place to preserve the corporate memory.

The Deputy Minister recalled his youth days when he frequented the local library to empower himself with knowledge which enabled him to fight the apartheid system. But his fighting spirit saw him being jailed and being denied access to information. "When we were in jail in the 1970s, we were deprived of political reading material and knowledge of what was happening around us. That is when we discovered the importance of collective power of reading and access to libraries."

Speaking on behalf of the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) during the launch, President Elect, Ms Segametsi Molawa outlined the background of the Library Week which she said dates back to 20 March 1818 when the first library of South Africa was opened which is today known as the National Library, Cape Town campus. In her address during the launch, Ms Molawa highlighted the significance of the Library Week and some of the greatest concerns of our moment, which include the burning down of libraries.

"On one hand, libraries contribute to the knowledge economy by providing access to global knowledge and information in different formats to advance research and the creation of new knowledge. On the other hand, the burning down of libraries during the service delivery protests over the past few years is impacting negatively on the strides made so far. Also the introduction of VAT on electronic resources will further reduce an already obliged

budget for all libraries,” Ms Molawa noted. “But all in all South Africa has the potential to be an information and knowledge society,” she said.

As part of the Library Week activities, the Department partnered with both internal and external stakeholders in various exhibitions where Public Works entities were also involved. The Library Week also culminated in an outreach programme on 18 March 2014 to Rakgotso High School in Hammanskraal - one of the disadvantaged schools which was identified and adopted by Public Works. The school has been identified as the best performing school around the area especially in Maths and Science, regardless of being without most learning resources, including a library. Public Works has already awarded five (5) bursaries to this school for University studies in the Built Environment professions in 2014.