



public works
& infrastructure

Department:
Public Works and Infrastructure
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Issued by Chief Directorate: Communications
079 416 5996

Enquiries: Zara Nicholson:

Issue Date: 25 November 2022

SPEECH BY MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE, PATRICIA DE LILLE

TITLE DEEDS HANDOVER TO 26 FAMILIES IN THORNHILL FINALISES LONG STANDING LAND REDISTRIBUTION PROCESS

NOTE TO EDITORS: The following speech was delivered by Minister Patricia de Lille at the Title Deeds handover to the Thornhill Farms Communal Property Trust in Thornhill in the Eastern Cape today:

Good morning, molweni

It is my greatest honour to be here with you all today as we once again show progress with government's land reform programme by handing over title deeds to a community previously removed from their land by the apartheid regime.

It is indeed a momentous occasion that we are here today, making history and reversing the unjust legacy of the apartheid past by giving title deeds to this community who were moved to this land after they were dispossessed of their original land many years ago by the brutal apartheid regime.

We are here to celebrate this important turning point with you but to say that we are sorry that you had to wait so long for the legal proof that this land is now officially yours.

This land you have waited so long to be formally returned to you with title deeds to be given to 26 families is now yours and in your families for generations to come.

Government's land reform programme aims to address the imbalances of our past but it is also about restoring dignity to our people through land ownership.

The Presidential Advisory Panel on Land Reform noted in its May 2019 report that title deeds are one of the common problem themes addressed by their report as instructed by the terms of reference.

One of the Panel's recommendations to advance land reform includes: the speedy transfer of title deeds/long term and tradable leases to beneficiaries of land reform, including those who occupy land already procured for land reform purposes.

Today we are acting on that recommendation and finalising this matter by issuing the title deeds of land that was transferred to this community by government in 2003 but without title deeds being issued to the beneficiaries.

There has been some contention around this land but today we are proud that you have overcome all the obstacles.

The beneficiaries today were moved from 23 villages in Hershel and Sterkspruit between 1975 and 1976 to an empty piece of land known as Thornhill by the then leader of the Ciskei.

Before the community were moved to Thornhill, you were promised land, houses, schools and clinics by the South African Deputy Secretary of Bantu Administration. However when the community arrived in Thornhill, they only found tents that could not cater for everyone.

In March 1994, before the first democratic election on 27 April 1994, the then Minister of Land Affairs approved the allocation proposals for the land by the Commission for Land Allocation to the community of Thornhill.

Out of the nine properties that were identified for transfer to the Thornhill community, 5 were under the custodianship of the Department of Public Works and 4 land parcels were under the Department of Land Affairs.

Both departments obtained ministerial approval for the transfers in terms of the State Land Disposal Act and National Treasury approved the disposal of the properties to the Thornhill Farms Communal Property Trust.

The registration of the properties to the Thornhill Farms Communal Property Trust took place in June 2003 but these properties were never formally handed over to the beneficiaries with title deeds.

DPWI transferred these properties on a gratis basis in line with the land reform programme.

The five properties we are handing over the title deeds for today has an estimated municipal value of over R10million for the five properties measuring more than 2 000 hectares.

As beneficiaries, you have waited too long and walked a long painful journey but that is over now.

Today you will get your title deeds. As government we want to say to you that we are honoured that we could settle this matter with you.

Colonial and apartheid laws saw people of colour being systematically dispossessed of their right to own land and to have not only homes for their families but prosperous land where many people had farms.

I want to say to all beneficiaries today, your patience is to be commended.

I want to take this moment to briefly reflect on one of beneficiary's account of this history.

Mama Hlomendlini reflected saying: "When we left Herschel we were falsely told that the government had already built houses for us, all we needed was a key to unlock the door. On arrival we were greeted by old torn sail tents in which were meant to be places of abode for us. They were already fully occupied and that led us to finding refuge under trees and bushes, irrespective of the weather conditions. We staged protests against that wicked and insensitive apartheid government." END QUOTE

As beneficiaries you have pledged to utilise the land maximally for agriculture and embark on commercial farming to provide economic opportunities and jobs for the community.

To the beneficiaries I want to say that I am inspired by your resilience and urge you to keep this land with you for years to come so that for hundreds of years to come, your children and grandchildren must never again feel the pain of landlessness.

As our dear Tata Madiba said: "Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another." End quote

Let us use today as a strong signal of what we can do as brothers and sisters in a united and democratic country.

My biggest motivation every day is that more people must taste the fruits of our democracy and today as beneficiaries you can say, you are feeling what it means to be a citizen in a democracy.

To all the departments, spheres of government and teams in DPWI who worked on this matter, to you I want to say thank you for your work.

But I must say: Khawuleza! Let us hurry up, the patience of our people is running out and has been tested for long enough.

We have made great progress with land releases and handovers but we must move much faster. We must put more urgency into the work of finalising land and title deed transfers especially for restitution and land redistribution cases.

Too many other beneficiaries are waiting for their land and we need to push this work with urgency. So please: Khawuleza.

To the leadership and beneficiaries, thank you again for your patience. May your land be fruitful and prosperous and may it bring you much success for you and your families for many years to come.

Enkosi, thank you and God bless you all.

ENDS

Enquiries:

Zara Nicholson: Media Liaison Officer to Minister Patricia de Lille

Mobile: 079 416 5996

Email: zara.nicholson@dpw.gov.za