



public works

Department:
Public Works
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Issued by Chief Directorate: Communications/ Ministry

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MEDIA STATEMENT

ISSUED: 10 DECEMBER 2010

TSHWANE – The Minister of Public Works, Ms Gwen Lindiwe Mahlangu-Nkabinde today (Friday 10 December 2010) launched the Disability Policy, with a difference. Meant to coincide with the celebrations for the International Day of Human Rights, the final document was a product of collaborative and consultative efforts and was developed by the disabled people themselves with the Department only providing guidance.

Speaking at the launch, the Minister who has a history of campaigning for the rights of the disabled people before being appointed into Cabinet, denounced any forms of discrimination against the disabled and said the Department should not be apologetic about opening up economic opportunities for the disabled enterprises and creating disabled millionaires.

“Today the launch of this policy signals the beginning of an active contract between my Department and the disabled sector. It is the basis of our working relationship and will inform our business strategies into the future, “committed the Minister.

As conceived, the Disability Policy of the Department of Public Works was founded on the three cornerstones for total empowerment, recognition and complete integration of the people with disability within the core business of the organization.

Primarily, the policy focuses on the Supply Chain Management regime of the Department. On daily basis, the Department of Public Works in the main enter into commercial transactions amounting to millions of rand as part of their mandate and their core functions to procure goods and services from both the construction and property industries.

Therefore with the launch of the policy, Public Works is beginning to probe the extent and the quality to which disabled people and their organizations and

companies can, and will participate with the intention to benefit from this significant economic activity. According to Minister Mahlangu-Nkabinde, “the Disability Indaba between Public Works and the disabled sector held on 15 & 16 October 2009 laid the foundation for the clarification of the role of the disabled people and their contribution in the economy and how best the Department could facilitate their effective participation in all its programmes.”

Also as the custodian of most government public buildings, more than 70 000 (seventy thousand) to be exact, the Department through its Policy will ensure compliance with international, regional and national instruments and norms which among others calls for “the universal designs that are usable by all people....” Thus the Department has, as part of its strategic plan identified the need to ensure that Government buildings were eventually accessible and user-friendly to persons with disabilities.

Most government stock was old and having been designed pre-1994, many are non-compliant and the Department was spending additional millions to redesign them to accommodate the needs of the disabled people. Herein lay further economic opportunities for companies run by the disabled people.

Lastly, the Policy, sub-titled: From Policy to Practice, backed by relevant and applicable legislation, would spur the affirmative action initiatives of the Department in the realization of its commitment to increase the number of the disabled people in its key positions. Deliberate and innovative recruitment interventions designed in favour of the disabled people were being promoted and strictly monitored. The idea was not only to meet but exceed national targets (2%) while simultaneously building an organization whose culture was characterized by the understanding and tolerance for differences. It was only when the disabled employees were preponderant in key positions that the appreciation of diversity would be ingrained and sustained.

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Date: 10 December 2010