

**Deputy Minister of Public Works
N Kganyago
13 May 2005**

[Back](#)

The Deputy Minister of Public Works, Mr Ntopile Kganyago MP, hands-over Karatara Forest Village

Venue: Karatara Village, Knysna Municipality, Western Cape

Date: 13 May 2005

- The MEC for Local Government and Housing in the Western Cape, Mr M L Fransman
- The Executive Mayor of the Knysna Municipality, Dr J Cole
- All Members of the Provincial Legislature present here today
- Senior government officials
- All officials of the local municipality
- Ladies and Gentlemen

The National Department of Public Works is mandated to be a custodian of national government's immovable assets, including land and buildings. As part of its daily key functions the department manages a sizeable portfolio of fixed property in order to realize among others the socio-economic objectives of government as well as add to the improvement of public service delivery.

Over the decades, government has acquired a massive fixed property portfolio which needs to be managed properly like any other resources, to attain aspirations and goals of government.

Without too much elaboration, the Department of Public Works is a custodian over a large property portfolio which includes land that before 1994, was regarded as part of the white South Africa. Using expropriation legislation at its disposal, the apartheid government in many instances forcefully removed communities from their ancestral lands and resettled them in line with its separate development policies.

Since 1994, this democratically elected government has been restoring land to its rightful owners as part of reversing the ill – effects of apartheid. The Department of Public Works continuously identifies government land for release to other spheres of government in fulfillment of land claim restitutions, provision of low cost housing and building of related municipality infrastructure.

In 2000, the Department formally handed-over eighty seven (87) hectares of land free of charge to the then Western District Council for the purpose of township establishment and the development of low-cost housing. The existing forest villages of Puntjebos, Die Rye and Laurel Ridge in the district of Humansdorp were included in the envisaged development.

During the Human Rights Day Celebrations on 21 March last year, the Department was again present to witness the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Government and the Plettenberg Bay Municipality for the restoration of the then state-owned land known as Farm Covie 287. We mentioned at the time that pending the finalization of the land claim, the land which was estimated to be worth more than nine million rand (R9m) would be transferred again free of charge to the claimants, whose claim was acceded to by the Regional Land Claims Commissioner for having met all the requirements set out in Section 2 of the Land Restitution Act of 1994.

It is an honor for the Department to be present at this joyous occasion of the hand over of Karatara Forest Village and to be able to make a contribution to ensure that current occupants will have ownership of the houses that they occupied during their former and current employment with Department of Water Affairs and Forestry and South African Forest Company Limited better known as SAFCOL.

The Department of Land Affairs has identified the Karatara Forest Village, situated on portion 1 of the Farm Eastbrook No: 183, approximately two point three two hectares (2,32ha) in extent, and a portion of the Farm Van der Wattsbos No: 513, approximately seventeen point seven eight hectares (17,78ha) in extent, in the District of Knysna, as a Land Reform Project. The project aimed to provide security of tenure for some 240 families in the area mainly employed by Safcol and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. To attain the goals of the project, the village which currently comprises of 16 brick and 37 wooden houses, has been provisionally subdivided into two hundred and fifty five (255) erven.

Consultation has taken place with all the stakeholders, including SAFCOL and the Department of Water

Affairs and Forestry. SAFCOL consented to the release and disposal of the properties subject to the following conditions:

- SAFCOL and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry employees/pensioners occupying the houses in the forest village should be given the right of first refusal to purchase or lease the residence.
- The supply of water and electricity to SAFCOL's installations and the forest village should be separated, at the cost of the Knysna Municipality: and

In May 1999, the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry approved the release of the subject properties from Karatara State Forest, to enable the free transfer thereof to the then Southern Cape District Council now known as Knysna Municipality.

The Minister of National Public Works approved the gratis transfer of the above-mentioned land on 7 December 1999 and the Treasury on 26 January 2000.

According to the valuation commissioned by the Department of Land Affairs in 1998, the open market value of the State Land (with improvements) was set at one poing one million Rand (R1, 1 million). All costs in respect of the transfer will be borne by the Department of Land Affairs and the Knysna Municipality.

From 2002 meetings were held between government and the Municipality of Knysna to work through the transfer process. As a result of these meetings a Management agreement between the Department and the Knysna Municipality was entered into on 1 August 2002. In this agreement the Department also agreed to contribute to the shortfall of the services and repairs on a decreasing scale over a period of three years to the Municipality from 01 August 2002 to 30 June 2005;

- 1 August 2002 to 30 June 2003 100%
- 1 August 2003 to 30 June 2004 67%, and
- 1 August 2004 to 30 June 2005 33%,

Where after the Department's contribution will be completed. The total amount paid for the first two years is R340 929.73. The final amount will be paid in this financial year. The cost was to cover the following external services; maintenance of roads, public open spaces, water works, procurement and distribution of water, sewerage works and sewer network, procurement and distribution of electricity and insurance of transformers, refuse removal and prevention of illegal occupation.

With regard to the transfer of Bergvallei Village, the Department is committed to accelerating the transfer processes to ensure that the 10 houses at Bergvallei are transferred to the Knysna Municipality as soon as possible, and thereafter to the occupants. This also applies to the transfer of the sewerage works situated on the Farm Eastbrook No: 183. The Department has however, in the meantime negotiated an agreement with the Municipality of Knysna to provide basic services to the residents of Bergvallei village.

Government is committed to fight and eventually eradicate poverty in its efforts to create a better life for all. Landlessness contributes to the state of poverty and government will mobilize resources at its disposal turn the tide of poverty. On behalf of the NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, I express my appreciation to be part of this event and wish you all the best for the future.

Thank you

[top](#)