



public works

Department:
Public Works
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DPW Human Capital Investment:

Bursary Awards Ceremony

**St Georges Hotel, Irene
9th January 2014**

Keynote Address:

**Honourable TW Nxesi, MP
Minister of Public Works**

PROTOCOL

- Programme Director
- The Executive Mayor of Tshwane, Cllr Kgosientso Ramakgopa
- Director-General, Mziwonke Dlabantu, and senior management of the Department of Public Works
- Vice-Chancellor of UNISA, Prof Makhanya, and other representatives of the higher education sector
- CEO of the Construction Education and Training Authority, Ms Pilusa
- Representatives of entities of Public Works – in particular the CBE (Council for the Built Environment) which has assisted in developing a skills strategy for the sector

- Principal of Giyani Secondary School, Mr Chabala – and other principals and representatives of the education sector: from the Department of Basic Education, School Governing Bodies and parents
- Learner representative, Ms Virginia Mbule of Rakgotso Secondary School, and most importantly all the learners and bursary beneficiaries present. I am pleased to be able to say that we have learners from schools in the following regions of Public

Works:

- Mmabatho – schools:
 - Regolotswe High School
 - Batho Betlong High School
 - Reebone High School
 - Thuto Buswa Secondary School
- Polokwane – schools:
 - Giyani High School
 - Kgakgatlou High School
 - EPP Mhinga
- Pretoria – schools:

- Rakgotso Senior School
- Soshanguve South High School
- Mthatha and Port Elizabeth – schools:
 - St James
 - Ngubezulu Senior School
 - Toli Senior Secondary School
 - Mpondombini Secondary School
 - Motherwell High School
 - Amazizi Senior Secondary School
 - Mnqweba Senior Secondary School, and
- Kimberly – schools:
 - Tshireleco High School
 - Thabani High School
 - William Pescod High School

Welcome all. It gives me great pleasure to be a part of this important event. Clearly it is an important occasion for the 50 beneficiaries of the bursaries to be awarded. But I also need to make the point that this initiative is part of a much bigger picture – our Seven Year Plan to

rebuild the Department of Public Works – which includes the following objectives:

- To rebuild the technical and professional capacity of Public Works and the state;
- To promote training and skills development in the Built Environment – in line with the needs of the National Infrastructure Plan and the NDP; and
- To transform the Built Environment professions to reflect the demographics of the country – and in particular to facilitate access for learners from disadvantaged communities.

When I worked in the education sector – as General-Secretary of the teachers union, SADTU – I always made the point - around Budget time - that money spent on the education of our children is not simply another expenditure and therefore a drain on the fiscus. Rather, it must be seen as an investment in the

lives of the learners, in the economy, and in the future well-being of the society as a whole.

Let us never forget the words of our own Tata Madiba: *“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”*

You will be aware – from media reports over several years – of major challenges and weaknesses in the Department of Public Works. There have been a number of scandals in relation to leases and construction projects in the past - due to poor management controls, lack of technical capacity and corruption. The Nkandla security upgrade is just one more example of the systemic crisis that was Public Works.

But we don't just lament. We have to act. In the case of lease fraud in the Johannesburg region the officials concerned were dismissed; the landlord is in court. In the case of irregularities committed on the Nkandla

project – and with the assistance of the SIU (Special Investigating Unit) and the Auditor-General – we are preparing disciplinary and other measures to hold people to account.

When I was appointed as Minister two years ago my first job was simply to come clean and acknowledge that there were serious challenges. We then had to carefully analyse the problems and develop solutions. This we have done – and the measures taken include a commitment to rebuild the professional capacity of the Department.

I firmly believe that had we had an adequate complement of professional and technical staff – such as qualified project managers, quantity surveyors and engineers – then we would have avoided most of the irregularities and over-spending that we witnessed all too often in the past.

It follows, therefore, that as Public Works we have a clear and strategic long-term interest in technical and professional training in the Built Environment – both to rebuild the professional capacity of the Department – and to contribute to scarce skills required in the Built Environment generally.

This task is all the more urgent as the country embarks on a massive National Infrastructure Plan as part of the National Development Plan.

As Public Works, we are committed to this Schools Programmes and to the individual learners concerned – across all the fields of study that we want to support:

- Civil, electrical, mechanical and chemical engineering
- Quantity Surveying
- Architecture and Landscape Architecture, and
- Town Planning.

Before I go any further, I need to acknowledge the good work and support of the Construction Education and Training Authority. The CETA has made available funding of R50 million for the following purposes:

- Recruitment to the following training programmes: Artisans, Candidacy Programme for professionals, and the Department's Skills Programme and Internship Programme;
- The funding also makes possible the awarding of 120 bursaries, of which there are 50 bursaries for the Schools Programme that we are awarding today. The other 70 bursaries will be awarded to second and third year students currently studying in the Built Environment disciplines.
- The CETA contributes R60,000 per annum to each bursary. Public Works has matched that amount to provide a total of R120,000 per annum per bursary.

- The bursary covers the following:
 - Tuition and residence fees – including meals (*we do not expect our students to study on empty stomachs*);
 - Textbooks, academic projects and other necessary resources;
 - As well as a monthly allowance to cover transport etc.

Let me also say a word about the good work being done by the Human Capital Investment unit of Public Works in many areas. But today we are celebrating the Schools Programme in particular.

The Schools Programme

As part of the initiative to build capacity in the Built Environment sector, the Department has adopted 15 schools in its Schools Programme - which is being

piloted in the National Office and the five Regional Offices I mentioned earlier.

The plan is to include schools from all regions in 2014 and later to extend the programme to the provincial departments.

The schools taking part were recommended by the Department of Basic Education through District Offices. The following selection criteria were used:

- Schools that are performing at an average of 65% pass rate and above
- Schools with individual learners performing above 65% in Maths and Science
- Less resourced schools
- Schools situated in rural, farm and townships areas.

Can I pause there and just address some remarks to our colleagues from the HCI (Human Capital Investment) unit:

- Thank you for the good work.
- It is indeed important that this year you extend the programme to all regions and provinces – but I would like to add that you make every effort to ensure the inclusion of more deep rural schools from across the country.
- I also need to comment on the gender ratio of the bursary beneficiaries – 28 male, 22 female. In a male-dominated set of professions this might be seen as a good start. But next year, we want to see at least 50% females. Indeed, for this year, if you have a further six females – suitably qualified – on your books, then the Department will find ways of funding them.

The need for the Schools Programme was informed by the 2008 Skills Audit Report conducted by the Council for the Built Environment. The Audit analysed skills shortages within the Built Environment – which were mainly attributed to poor throughput rates in the education system. The Schools Programme therefore seeks to address these challenges and promote the teaching of Maths and Science as well as to open up access to the Built Environment professions.

CBE's Skills Audit – and more recent updates – indicates that still only a quarter of professionals in the Built Environment are black. One of the mandates of the Department of Public Works is to facilitate transformation in the Built Environment – and the Schools Programme is clearly in line with that mandate to promote the training of black professionals in the sector.

The specific aims of the Schools Programme include the following:

- To promote Built Environment and property related careers by supporting maths and science learners
- To encourage learners to take up maths and science
- To support learners to grasp maths and science concepts through additional tutoring and targeted teaching and learning methodologies
- To address the lack of school resources that lead to poor performance of learners
- To support and equip Educators and the School Management Team with skills and techniques relevant to the schooling environment
- To promote parental participation in learner education, and

- To offer bursaries to outstanding performers.

Learners who participated in the Schools Programme will be prioritised in the awarding of bursaries to follow Built Environment or property careers. They will be afforded an opportunity to go through the Department's candidacy programme when they qualify and ultimately acquire professional registration.

As a nation we started this week on a high note – educationally speaking - with the highest matric pass rate since 1994 – both in percentage terms and in absolute numbers.

Congratulations to all the matriculants, their teachers and their parents – and to the Minister of Basic Education. It is a joint effort.

We have to remind ourselves sometimes just how far we have come since 1994:

- We now have universal access to basic education – now including Grade R; and
- We have doubled the number of students in the Higher Education sector and provided bursaries and loans to allow access to poorer students.

We still have a long way to go to overcome the inequalities of the past – but I believe that we are on course.

The focus now must be on improving the quality of education. Interventions such as the DPW's Schools Programme make an important contribution.

But as we seek to build quality learning and teaching we have to work together – government, Basic Education, Higher Education and Training, the SETAs, parents, SGBs, teachers, teacher unions and the community – each with our specific roles and responsibilities.

Finally, let me address a few words to the learners who will be awarded bursaries. By the way, they only received their final matric results this week – like everybody else. I am pleased to announce that not only did they all pass – but they passed at the required level for entrance into university to study in the Built Environment disciplines. Congratulations to all of you.

Never forget that you are here today as a result of your own hard work and commitment.

Your future – as you enter the Higher Education environment – holds many opportunities, but also many challenges. Ultimately, success is dependent on you. You need to keep up the hard work – and avoid all the obvious temptations.

Support structures are in place – academic, spiritual and psychological – so if you do run into problems seek help as soon as possible. There are people there

whose job it is to support you – so make use of these facilities.

When I say work hard, take a balanced approach – also make time for sporting, cultural and other activities. You know the saying: “A healthy mind and a healthy body.” So work hard – but enjoy your time in Higher Education as a time to develop as a person, holistically – personally, socially, spiritually, physically – as well as academically and professionally.

I wish you well for the future. Indeed, you are the future of the Built Environment professions in South Africa.

I thank you.