

**Minister of Public Works**  
**Mr J Radebe**  
**20 February 1999**

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## **Official Opening of the Atlantis Magistrate's Court**

Honourable Executive Deputy-President Thabo Mbeki  
Honourable Minister of Justice Dullah Omar  
His Worship the Mayor  
Members of Parliament  
Religious and civic leaders  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my honour and privilege this morning to extend a warm welcome on the occasion of the official opening of the Atlantis Magistrates Court. First of all allow me to thank all of you for attending this auspicious function.

The Atlantis Court or "White House" as it is known around here because of its setting in a landscape of green lawns, is indeed a beautiful and aesthetic structure. It is a far cry from the two prefabricated buildings that it has replaced. It resonates an aura worthy of the important role that it occupies in this community and our country as a whole.

What is more important is the fact that the local community was not only involved in the planning of the Court but in its construction as well. Through the process of co-ordinated consultation between the architect and the Atlantis Development Forum agreement was reached on the selection of a site and the positioning of the building on the site. This building is seen as an extension of the West Fleur Town Centre and the third civic building in the area after the Police Station, the Public Library and Local Authority Offices.

Honourable Deputy-President, my department's brief was to construct a court building that would form part of our client department's efforts to transform the country's justice system. The courts therefore have been constructed to provide accommodation for a Supreme Court, two regional courts, and four magistrate's courts, one of which was to be used as a court for civil cases: a facility not available in Atlantis.

One of the key features of this building, Mr Executive Deputy President, is that it allows officials of the court, the support staff, the public and the awaiting trial prisoners access to courts along different routes of the building without coming into conflict.

At the same time we have pursued the development of a simple but clear concept of joining the different elements around the circulation network. This has ensured that we achieve visual clarity in a large magistrate's court that is at the same time not intimidating to the inexperienced public. The seven courts are directly accessible from the security of the judge's chambers and magistrates offices as well as the holding cells for awaiting trial prisoners in the basement below the courts.

In all, Mr Executive Deputy President, ladies and gentlemen, we have attempted to design a 'user friendly' civic building with the status which will enhance the community's faith in the rule of law and the justice system and make it more accessible to them.

This building which has cost just over R16 million to construct and has contributed considerably to the local economy during its construction phase through the employment of local labour, the development of emerging contractors and a process of skills transfer. It continues to provide a number of opportunities for employment to the local support staff. It can therefore truly be called a people's court- built for the people by the people.

It is therefore my privilege and honour to fulfil the brief of my colleague, the Honourable Minister of Justice, Dullah Omar for the construction of a unique court building here in Atlantis. My department remains committed Mr Executive Deputy-President to provide infrastructure of the highest quality that not only enhances our physical landscape but also reflects the ethos of our new democracy: buildings and structures that reflect the values and principles that have been the hallmark of our struggle for justice and peace.

I want to appeal to the local community to take ownership of their "White House" and ensure that the building remains the pride of the people of Atlantis. I would like to request you to take an active interest in its maintenance so that it may remain as one of the most outstanding features on the physical landscape of this West Coast town.

One of the most serious challenges that we face as a new government is the huge backlog of infrastructure development. Throughout the length and breadth of our country the ravages of Apartheid's skewed development policies manifests itself in the lack and decay of critical infrastructure. Despite that we remain committed to improving the quality of life of all our people through improved service delivery. Over the past four years this is reflected in our increased investment in infrastructure capital works from R201 million in 1993/4 to R345 million in 1994/95, to R425 million in 1995/6 to R449 million in 1996/97 and to R853 million in 1997/98. Communities like you here in Atlantis have benefited from improved delivery in government infrastructure projects. This has literally created thousands of opportunities especially for historically disadvantaged individuals and communities in terms of access to work and access to state contracts that increased from 3% in 1994 to 28% in 1997.

As Minister of Public Works I want to assure you that though much still remains to be done, the building has begun in the remotest areas of our land. From the magistrates courts here in Atlantis to the magistrates court in the rural town of Tsolo in the Ea stern Cape; to the market stalls of Bolubedu in the Northern Province; and the taxi rank and stalls in Khayalitsha; communities all over our country have joined in partnership with government to build a better future for all our people.

I take this occasion therefore to thank all of you for joining this morning in celebrating another milestone of delivery to the people of Atlantis. On behalf of my department and government as a whole I want to express our gratitude to all the members of t his community, the technical team, the responsible officials of my department and all who participated in the planning and construction of this new Atlantis Court. Well done and congratulations to all of you! This building will remain a symbol of great pri de and a legacy for future generations!

I Thank You!

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