

**SPEECH NOTES BY THE KZN MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY & LIAISON, HON. WILLIES MCHUNU AT THE EASTER HOLIDAY ROAD SAFETY LAUNCH HELD AT WEMBEZI, ESTCOURT:**

13<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

Programme Director;  
AmaKhosi AseNdlunkulu present;  
Members of the Provincial Legislature present;  
Umtshezi Mayor;  
Councillors;  
Law enforcement personnel;  
Officials of various government departments;  
Road Safety Ambassadors;  
All our stakeholders;  
Members of the Media;  
Distinguished Guests;  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Programme Director, allow me to thank all of you for attending today's official Easter Holiday Road Safety Launch. To start with, I thought it would be necessary for me to touch on the changes that have taken place in the Department of Transport recently.

As Government, we have decided to redeploy the Transport Head, Mr Chris Hlabisa, with effect from the beginning of this month. We had to compromise him to ensure that we utilise our human resources in a manner that is responsive to the needs of our people.

We all know that one of our priorities as government this year is infrastructure development. His Excellency the President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Jacob Zuma, made reference to this many times during his State of the Nation Address.

Part of this, the President said, is the development and integration of rail and road infrastructure. In view of the urgency for the implementation of this plan, we have decided to compromise Mr Hlabisa and let him assume another task at a national level but still within the transport family.

Because of the importance of this position of the HOD, we have already advertised the post to invite applications. We hope that the process of obtaining the most suitable and deserving person will be completed as soon as possible.

We have since appointed Mr S'busiso Gumbi as Acting HOD while the process is underway. Gumbi possesses theoretical and practical experience in the Transportation field. He joined the Department in 1996 and has since climbed the ladder, going through the ranks until he became General Manager.

I am confident again that in the meantime while he is acting, you will enjoy a healthy and prosperous relationship with him.

Coming to today's event, when we launched our festive road safety programme last year, we said it was for summer holidays and beyond.

By saying "and beyond", we meant a move away from the trend that as Government, we step up our road safety campaigns around particular times of the year when traffic volumes are at their peak such as the festive season and Easter holidays.

Shortly after the festive season launch, we had a partnership with the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) in the fight against road carnage. The labour union came forward and committed to work with government on a campaign that was dubbed 'Operation Val'ingozi'.

Once again, I wish to thank the bold leadership demonstrated by POPCRU KZN for coming on board in this endeavour to stop the unnecessary deaths.

We have rolled out this campaign and reached many of our stakeholders where we engaged each other in building partnerships, promoting high moral values, respect for the rule of law and educational campaigns on road safety.

It would therefore be inappropriate of me not to also express my sincere appreciation to all civil society organizations, academics, activists, celebrities, religious leaders, traditional leaders, municipalities and ordinary people who have joined this important campaign of saving the lives of innocent people.

Although the number of fatalities over the last festive season was still high, there was an indication that a number of road users, particularly public transport operators, in KwaZulu-Natal have since heeded the call to revive their morals and consciences as individuals who contribute to societal safety and well-being or lack of it.

Now, all this takes us to where we are today. Today's event is a continuation of our programme as I have explained. But it is true that in view of the nature of the Easter Holidays, it is relevant that we review our plan and adjust it to suite this particular period. And we have deliberately called for this review and adjustment three weeks before the Easter weekend.

We know that very soon people will be preparing to take short holidays, migrant workers will go home to their families and Christians will be travelling to various places of worship. Sadly, this is also a time when religious and family celebrations are turned into nightmares for some families.

You will remember that we declared the year 2011 as the year of People's Activism Against Road Carnage and Transgressions. Now, to further strengthen that the theme for 2012 is, 'The year of Deepening People's Activism Against Road Accidents'.

Today we are recommitting ourselves to galvanize communities and deepen our partnerships with relevant stakeholders to support and embrace Operation Val'ingozi Campaigns.

One of our priorities as the Department of Transport this year is to conclude our operational structure, that is, the organogram, and put it into effect as soon as possible. This will mean the filling of 56 vacancies in our Road Transport Inspectorate (RTI), as well as recruiting more traffic officers so as to strengthening our law enforcement personnel.

We are also working on implementing the three shifts system that will ensure visibility of traffic officers on most of the province's roads around the clock.

We have already purchased more than 30 patrol vehicles to ensure that the RTI in all four regions has the necessary resources to effectively and efficiently perform its mandate to make the roads in this province safer. Today we will be handing over 14 of these vehicles to various stations.

The purchasing of these vehicles addresses the following:

- a) Shortfalls that stations are currently experiencing in their vehicle fleets;
- b) Uneconomical vehicles with high mileages that require replacement.

Included is these vehicles are LDV's which are being allocated to stations that cover rural roads within the province. We have also added three more Automotive Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) vehicles. These patrol vehicles are fitted with technology that reads the number plate of vehicles stationary or moving and instantly tell us about any outstanding business with its owner, that is, previous offences related to traffic transgressions.

Programme Director, as part of our plan, all traffic officers will be deployed over this period. Night patrols have been identified along the major corridors to detect deviant driver behaviour and risk-taking. The Department's Special Operations team will target long distance coaches and mini bus taxis to ensure the safety of passengers.

Our Red Spot Team will continue to deal specifically with those areas identified as red spots in the province because of the frequency of accidents.

There will be several multi-disciplinary road blocks all around the province, together with the SAPS, local authority traffic agencies and other enforcement agencies that will target drunk driving, un-roadworthy motor vehicles, unlicensed drivers, overloading as well as other crimes in general.

Another thorny issue that we are facing as Government is corrupt and fraudulent acquisition of licences at the Driver Licence Testing Centres (DLTCs). We have a growing number of people who opt for the easy way out. This number contributes to the rise of the accident rate that happens on our roads precisely because they are not fit to drive as they have not gone through the necessary training to prepare them to be safer drivers.

Fraud and corruption remain a cancer that cripples the potential, growth and the effectiveness of the work of any organization. We therefore take this opportunity to commend our Special Operations Unit for uncovering corrupt and fraudulent activities at the Mandeni Testing Centre.

This discovery came months after the Unit instituted an investigation following a report in 2009 which revealed that the Mandeni DLTC was suspected of fraudulently issuing licences to anyone for the right price. The Centre has since been closed until further notice.

More than 2500 driving licences were issued fraudulently and of those 130 have already been cancelled. The officers have been suspended on the system and will not be allowed to examine anywhere else.

Some other illegal licence holders were subjected to a retest but could not even get the vehicle started which meant if they had been tested under normal conditions they would not have received their licences.

There is also KwaSani DLTC in Underberg which we had shut down because of irregularities. Ezinqoleni on the south coast requested our intervention and upon our investigation we decided to close the centre. There is also another municipality on the south coast that has declared itself as incapable to run the centre and requested our intervention.

Needless to say, in our context, the fight against fraud and corruption is a direct contribution to a safe road environment.

Hence, let me take this opportunity to warn other DLTC's not to succumb to fraudulent ways of issuing licences. Also to the public, I appeal to anyone who obtained their licence under these conditions to do the right thing and submit the licence so we can cancel them. By that you will be contributing to our efforts of deepening activism against road accidents and transgressions.

We have learnt also that because of our operations and law enforcement, people are now crossing provincial borders to obtain their Professional Driving Permits (PrDP). Most of these are people who have criminal records.

In this regard, I am planning to engage my colleagues who are other provincial MECs so as to establish how their traffic authorities bypass the verification of finger prints.

I also stand here before you as the political head of the KZN Department of Community Safety and Liaison. In August 2010, I was here in Estcourt to launch our crime prevention programme called Operation Hlasela.

It is a known fact that this area of Estcourt was affected by political conflicts which compelled the Provincial Multi Party Political Committee to visit the area to ensure peace and stability before the May 2011 Local Government Elections.

A Political Multi-Party Prayer was also staged in Mbabazane, in the Loskop area, in September 2011, to pray for peace and stability after the Local Government elections. The work of this committee yielded the desired results in this area.

So once again, we want to take this opportunity to revive our partnership with communities in the fight against crime. We want to strengthen our monitoring of SAPS investigations and operations in the area, but also promote co-operation between the police and the community.

Let us all show that it cannot be right that KwaZulu-Natal is always the worst province in the country when it comes to spreading the HIV and AIDS pandemic that kills in numbers.

We cannot be the ones that lead other provinces because of the high incidents of road carnage, taxi violence, political violence and other criminal activities. It cannot be that every year statistics put us on top of the list in the country.

The President has declared this year as the year of Unity in Diversity. Let us do our best to live up to the lofty ideals of peaceful co-existence, prosperity, peace, political and religious tolerance and celebrate our unity in diversity.

**I thank you**