

Address by MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, Mr Willies Mchunu during the media briefing on the redeployment of the Transport Head Mr Chris Hlabisa, 28 February 2012.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the media, allow me to extend a special word of gratitude to all of you for having honoured our invitation to this media briefing.

We have decided to call this briefing in order to officially announce the redeployment of Mr Chris Hlabisa with effect from the beginning of March.

We felt that it would be important to bring this to the attention of the public through our media houses with whom we know he has had a healthy relationship since his appointment as HOD in 2007.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we do not regard Mr Hlabisa's redeployment as a departure but as another strategic move by the people's government to ensure that we utilise our human resources in a manner that 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, has made reference to this frequently during his State of the Nation Address.

Part of this, the President said is the development and integration of rail and road infrastructure, especially in provinces where we need to unlock the enormous mineral belts of coal, platinum, palladium, chrome and other minerals, in order to facilitate increased mining as well as stepped-up beneficiation of minerals.

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 in the transport family.

While we value his contribution and he is a person no one would imagine losing at this juncture, we however agree that his capacity, ability and credentials in the public service qualify him to elevation so that he now serves the country as a whole.

Mr Chris Hlabisa was born and bred in KwaZulu Natal. He is an academic, technologist and a civil engineer. He is alumni to many different tertiary institutions in KwaZulu Natal and various public and private organizations.

He was central to the amalgamation and establishment of a unified KZN Department of Transport. He played a key role to facilitate the end of divisions in government before the demise of the old apartheid order. His input led to the establishment of the KZN Department of Transport which came into being in 1995.

He started at the KZN Department of Transport as a Resident Engineer specializing in road and bridge construction for three years. During those days of apartheid he was required to attain a professional registration for himself in order to be able to approve roads and bridge projects.

He was appointed a Control Industrial Technician, and finally as Deputy Director: Technical Services. In 1995 he was appointed as a regional engineer and five years later became promoted regional director. He then became general manager of Operations in 2002. In 2007, he found himself occupying the driver's seat as the administrative Head of the Department.

In 2002 he registered with the Engineering Council of Southern Africa (ECSA) as a professional engineering technologist. He became the first Vice President of the South African Roads Federation (SARF) in 2004-2005 and then the President in 2006-2007.

Hlabisa's educational background includes:

- National Diploma in Civil Engineering (T3): Mangosuthu Technikon (1983 – 1985);
- National Diploma in Civil Engineering (T4): Natal Technikon (1993 – 1994);
- Bachelor's Degree in Technology (Civil): Natal Technikon (1996 – 1998);
- Management Development Programme (MDPO): University of Durban Westville (1998 – 1999).

Some of the major projects that have taken place under Hlabisa's watch as KZN Transport Department Head include the following:

1. African Renaissance Road Upgrading Programme (ARRUP) which focuses surfacing gravel roads with black top in previously marginalized communities;
2. Roads of National Importance, including the John Ross Highway as well as Sani Pass which connects South Africa to Lesotho through the province of KwaZulu-Natal;
3. The on-going provision of pedestrian bridges which help previously disadvantaged rural communities to access schools, clinics, pension pay-points, and other community entities;
4. Sensitising communities and major churches about road safety in the light of increased vehicle population which contributes to road carnage;
5. Ensuring the on-going successful implementation of the Vukuzakhe Emerging Contractor Programme which has seen the introduction of new road constructors;

6. Ensuring the on-going successful implementation and growth of the Department's flagship programme which is now an exemplary part of the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) known as the Zibambele rural road maintenance poverty alleviation programme that is being rolled out in other parts of the country;

Given this kind of history, achievements and calibre, you will readily agree Ladies and Gentlemen that Mr Chris Hlabisa really deserves to be redeployed to serve the interests not of the KZN citizens only, but of the country as a whole.

I also want to mention that because of the importance of the position Hlabisa is leaving behind, we have already advertised the post to invite applications. We hope that the process of getting the most suitable and deserving person will be completed as soon as possible.

Furthermore, we have appointed Mr S'busiso Gumbi as Acting HOD while the process is underway. Gumbi possesses theoretical and practical experience in the Transportation field.

He obtained the following academic qualifications over the years:

- * Bachelor of Admin – UKZN (1994)

- * Honours in Bachelor of Admin (Industrial Relations) UKZN (1995)

Post Graduate Diploma in Transportation Management – University of Johannesburg (1999);

- * Attended Transport Seminars and Workshops in USA, Germany, Curitiba, Columbia and Brazil.

Gumbi joined the Department in 1996 to head the administration and management of the provincial Taxi Office which was tasked to regulate and formalize the taxi industry in the province.

In the year 2000 he was tasked to head the Taxi Registrar's where he managed the functioning of the Registrar's Office, the Taxi Appeal Tribunal and Licensing Board.

In 2002 he was appointed as Director: Public Transport Policy and Planning where he was tasked to develop transport policies and strategies and further develop and monitor the development of Transport Plans in the province.

In 2008 he was appointed to the post of General Manager: Taxi Recapitalisation where he was tasked to ensure the implementation and monitoring of the Programme.

In July 2010, Gumbi was appointed General Manager: Regulatory Entity where he is tasked to manage, monitor and oversee Land Transport in the province.

Gumbi is serving in different committees in the Department, among them are the following:

- *The member of the Bid Awad Committee;

- * The member of the Appeals Authority that deals with disciplinary code and procedures;

- * The chairperson of the Task Team that deals with Departmental restructuring.

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

I thank you