

**Ceremonial handover of the management and control of indigenous state  
forests in the Southern Cape (Knysna) to SANParks**  
**Speech by Mr T Balzer, Manager: National Transfers, on behalf of Ms Buyelwa  
Sonjica, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry**  
**1 April 2005**

Programme Director,  
Minister van Schalkwyk,  
MEC De Wet  
MEC Essop  
Executive Mayors  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good Morning, I bring you greetings and a very sincere apology on behalf of my Minister for Water Affairs and Forestry. Minister Buyelwa Sonjica is unfortunately not able to attend today's co-hosted function due to an extremely important meeting which she is attending in Paris (at very short notice) where the African Development Bank (ADB) is promoting a multi-billion Rand rural water supply initiative. The initiative is being supported by the French Government and President Jacques Chirac will also be attending the meeting. Please do accept her apology.

**Message on behalf of Minister**

The transfer of management powers and duties for the Southern Cape Forests to SANParks, must be seen in the context of a much broader programme of restructuring of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. In terms of this programme, the Department is withdrawing from its current direct operational management responsibilities in both the water and forestry sectors in order to focus on its policy making, regulatory and oversight mandate.

The Department is currently engaged in a programme to transfer the management and control of all state natural forests by the end of the 2008/09 financial year to other competent management agencies, primarily to Provincial Government Departments or National/Provincial Conservation agencies.

More specifically therefore, focusing on the Southern Cape, some 97 000 hectares of state forests, currently managed by the Department of Water Affairs & Forestry are being transferred to SANParks. This area includes:

- 35 700 hectares of indigenous forests;
- 35 600 hectares of mountain catchment area (mostly fynbos in the Outeniqua and Tsitsikamma mountains); and
- 25 900 hectares of land currently under pine plantations which will be clearfelled, rehabilitated and transferred to SANparks over the next fifteen years.

This transfer is part of this bigger process of putting the administration of our precious indigenous forests in the best possible hands. Indigenous forest covers less than one percent of South Africa and the Knysna/Tsitsikamma forest is the jewel in the crown, the largest single natural forest in South Africa. My Department has worked with SANParks and other stakeholders, including organised labour for nearly four years to ensure that the process runs smoothly.

The transfer of the Knysna/Tsitsikamma forest is part of a wider process involving not just SANParks but also Provincial Nature Conservation agencies to whom forest management is being transferred under the National Forest Act. Under the agreement with SANParks, the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry will maintain oversight over the management of the forests in terms of agreed policy approaches. We are also transferring the budget for the

management of these forests to SANParks, as well as about 124 staff – including highly qualified foresters and specialists in harvesting indigenous forests.”

Transfers of this nature do not happen without a very high level of inter-departmental co-ordination and co-operation. The President has challenged Government to address issues of capacity, and to strengthen the developmental state. Initiatives like this one give impetus to that challenge – ensuring that co-ordination and co-operation between departments delivers the best results for our communities. This is in fact just one of many areas where my Department is co-operating with the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

Thank you.