



MINISTRY

WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Handover Ceremony of the Pietersdal Office Block to the Free State Public works
and Rural Development.**

**Address By The MS Buyelwa Sonjica, MP, Honourable Minister of Water and Environmental
Affairs
Clarens, Free State Province
19 August 2010**

Honourable MEC for Public Works and Rural Development, also standing in for Premier
Magashule

The High Commissioner of RSA to Lesotho, Ntate Mahlangu

Executive Mayor of Thabo Mofutsanyane Municipality, Mme Mopeli

Mayor of Dihlabeng Local Municipality

Executive Councils

Our Traditional Leaders here present led by Ntate Mopeli, Chairperson in the Province

Deputy Chairman of TCTA

Directors General and other senior officials

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Dumelang.

I am honoured and pleased to be taking part in this prestigious ceremony; a ceremony that shows our commitment as government to fostering working partnerships amongst the public entities, as well as between the public entities and communities.

My impression is that for all of us here today, this moment is loaded with history and memories of how this building came into being and its significance to the country as a whole.

I am excited at the timing of this event as well, falling immediately behind the significant State Visit led by the President of the Republic of South Africa, HE JG Zuma, to the Kingdom of Lesotho, whose government is led by Prime Minister Phakalitha Mosisili. The visit was particularly significant for the issues of water were very high on the agenda of the two leaders.

The Lesotho Highlands Water Project is an ongoing water supply project with a hydropower component, developed in partnership between the governments of the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa. It comprises a system of several large dams and tunnels throughout Lesotho and South Africa. In Lesotho, it involves the

rivers called Malibamatso, Matsoku, Senqunyane and Senqu. In South Africa, it involves the Vaal River. This project has been hailed as Africa's largest water transfer scheme.

The purpose of the project is to transfer water to the central Gauteng province where the majority of industrial and mining activity occurs in South Africa, while, simultaneously generating hydroelectric power and a source of income for the people of Lesotho.

The Lesotho Highlands Water Project was identified more than 50 years ago as the most cost effective water resource development to benefit both the peoples of the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa.

The Phase I of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project was a bi-national project implemented by TCTA within the borders of South Africa and the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority within the borders of Lesotho, in accordance with the Treaty and overseen by the Lesotho Highlands Water Commission.

On behalf of the government of South Africa and the Department of Water Affairs, TCTA was responsible for the construction of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project on the South African side from 1986 until completion in the late 1990s and early 2000. TCTA is now responsible for the debt management and funding of the water transfer part of the project and will continue to do so until this has been settled.

In accordance with the treaty between South Africa and the Kingdom of Lesotho, social development programmes in the project were implemented by the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority in terms of International Best Practice. At a stakeholder conference where social issues were assessed, the Katse project area was awarded an overall score of 88%, while the Mole and Muela areas received an 85% and 75% score respectively. Another annual national stakeholder conference which was attended by representatives of local, regional and international partners scored the project's overall performance on social and environmental issues at 84%, 6% higher than the previous score.

The construction of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project necessitated that, as government, we consider the basic needs of the host communities in terms of socio-economic development. During the implementation of the project, in partnership with TCTA, we were quite active in creating opportunities for employment and economic activity. A community hall named Martie Hall was donated to the Dihlabeng Local Municipality in recognition of their goodwill to accept us to operate in this area.

The Ash River Outfall in the Clarens area remains a major tourist attraction in the Maluti Meander and surrounding areas. Furthermore, TCTA constructed 41 houses in Khubetswana nearby to accommodate employees involved in the project. A farm adjacent the Ash River Outfall, Botterkloof, is another legacy of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. TCTA is currently conducting viability exercises to explore fruitful usage of this property for the benefit of the host communities.

MEC, as you know and will attest to, our government is committed to the principles of public-public partnerships like this one, which we know have the ability to strengthening capacity at operational level and can enhance service delivery and service performance. It is therefore of utmost importance that the recipient provincial department of Public Works and Rural Development in the Free State Province will utilise the Pietersdal office block to bring government services closer to the people of eastern Free State. This must be in the

context of improving service delivery. We hope this facility will assist to promote the involvement of communities in the provision of such government services. By involving the communities we hope this will lead to improved services and greater efficiency. Most importantly, we hope this facility will assist to build stronger community support and accountability for government services.

In the course of implementing the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, a number of buildings were constructed around the eastern Free State, including this office block in Pietersdal. Primarily, the building was used to accommodate the employees working on the project, seconded from the head office of the Department of Water Affairs. Upon completion of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, the department, in conjunction with TCTA, embarked on a process to ensure that these buildings were transferred to entities that would utilise them in a sustainable and productive manner. The Pietersdal office block is one of them, and we are positive that the department will use it to the benefit of the surrounding communities.

Therefore, we hope that service provision in this building will be sourced from the surrounding communities in an empowering manner. Both the Department of Water Affairs and TCTA support transformation and socio economic development objectives which enhance skills development, capacity building and empowerment in the true sense. Therefore, the use of this facility should take a route that will add value to the lives of our people and should not be a 'white elephant'.

In light of major lessons learnt from the implementation of our infrastructure projects, we are of the view that our current interventions pertaining to socio-economic and sustainable development will have an indelible impact in our host communities. Furthermore, we will use our infrastructure investment as a catalyst for change to transform our communities and our people. This ceremony today is a clear example of that commitment.

As I have mentioned before, we encourage partnerships and collaboration among public entities in order to be able to deploy scarce resources efficiently. By donating this building to the provincial government, we are guaranteed that it will be utilised efficiently, for the benefit of the public. I am confident it is in capable hands.

I am informed and pleased to learn that in organising this prestigious event, we have ensured that all the services, supplies and labour were procured from the local municipality and the province, in order to stimulate local economic activity. We know this gesture will add value to the economy of this region and encourage participation by all our people in government activities.

It gives me great pleasure to now officially handover this beautiful building to the Honourable MEC standing in for the Premier, knowing fully that it will go a long way to enhance service delivery to the surrounding communities and the province broadly.

KE A LEBOHA; PULA! I THANK YOU.