

**Address by Minister of Energy: Ms Dipuo Peters; MP
During the Sod Turning Ceremony
Kwamnyathi, Abaqulusi Municipality
Nyathi Sports Ground
Vryheid
30th June 2009**

Programme Director

Hon Mchunu, MEC for Local Government and Traditional Affairs

Nkosi Xulu and our Traditional Leaders

Mayor of Abaqulusi and fellow Councilors

People of Kwamnyathi

We are here today in Kwamnyathi to continue with a journey we started in 1994, a journey to restore the dignity of our people; to fight poverty and underdevelopment; through provision of basic services of which we were denied of under the apartheid regime.

We are all acutely aware that before 1994, rural areas like Kwamnyathi were never part of the plans of those who controlled the levers of power, and that is why our government made it its top priority to deliver services to the most rural areas of our country.

Today is once more an affirmation by our government that rural development will remain foremost in our drive to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment.

This commitment is further emphasized by the manifesto of the ruling party, and the creation of a dedicated department to drive the agenda of rural development.

Programme Director

Today we want to say to the people of Kwamnyathi, that you do not need to be in Ethekwini or Johannesburg, to have access to electricity and other basic services.

As government we know that those of our people, who experience the harsh reality of poverty, are in areas like Kwamnyathi.

- Where women have to travel long distances on foot, to fetch wood and water, with children on their back.
- Where children at times, have to study with a candle light, and thus in the long-term having impact on their eyesight.
- Where the elderly and sick are unable to receive proper health care, as the local clinic does not have access to electricity.
- Where children are unable to study technology related subjects, because again the school thus not have electricity.

Programme Director

Like I said; today is a continuation of a journey we started in 1994, to undo the terrible hardship brought unto our people, by a system that was designed to make us permanent beggars.

Mphakathi wakulendawo yakwaManyathi (the community of Kwamnyathi), today this sod turning mark the beginning of an electrification of 1144 households, at a total cost of R12,4 million.

Upon completion of this project, over 1144 families will never have to travel long distances to fetch wood in order to cook, or their children to study with a candle light.

The days of criminals attacking and raping our elderly and vulnerable at night, because there is no electricity are numbered.

This project during its implementation phase will also create necessary jobs for the local community; therefore it is not only bringing light to our homes, but also food on the table.

This is indeed a great relief during this period of global economic recession; I wish to make a passionate appeal to the contractors that employment opportunities must be given to the most deserving and not to friends and families of those connected.

Programme Director

It is in this province where we have also been informed of a situation where electrification of households in some cases, was used as a political weapon to unfairly disadvantage other citizens.

Let me state it categorically clear that poverty and underdevelopment has no party political affiliation, and accordingly we should not in our conduct act as the previous apartheid government, which discriminated on our people on the basis of their skin colour.

Our government at all levels; is there to serve our people irrespective of which party they support or have voted, accordingly even those officials working for government and state owned entities must serve all our people.

I urge our people to report those officials who conduct themselves in such unbecoming behaviour, we will not tolerate corrupt and unethical behaviour by officials employed to deliver a service.

It is rather important to use service delivery as a further catalyst to heal the Province of Kwazulu-Natal, the municipality of Abaqulusi, of which in the past was ravaged by political violence.

The violence which brought upon our people untold suffering and hardship, accordingly we as servants of our people should always strive to build a better Province, free from any threat of violence in whatever form.

Accordingly let us, at all times strive to work harder and with absolute efficiency in ensuring that basic services reach all our people, in a non partisan manner.

Programme Director, People of Kwamnyathi;

In the true spirit of working together, as part of government's wider programme of speeding up service delivery, Last week Wednesday, I had an opportunity to meet the Premier of this Province, Dr Zweli Mkhize and his entire Cabinet.

In that meeting we discussed in detail mechanisms we need to put in place, in ensuring that each household in Kwazulu-Natal, over the next five years can have access to electricity or any other source of energy supply.

In that engagement we looked at a plan for the entire Province and not for a specific section of the province which support this or that.

It is in that meeting in which we also agreed that all forms of energy sources must be explored, including renewable energy, so that all our people can have access to a better life.

People of Kwamnyathi

I therefore urge you to work together with us in ensuring that indeed we succeed in our endeavor to eradicate poverty.

We ought to work harder to eradicate poverty, especially given the fact that we are launching this electrification project, a day before the start of August month.

A month which symbolizes the struggle waged by women; both in rural and urban areas, against apartheid tyranny; and all its related oppressive laws and practices.

We therefore need to know that women and our country will never be completely free, if there are still women who have to travel long distances to ferry wood or water just to put a meal on a table.

Programme Director

As we commence with the electrification of Kwamnyathi, let's remember that our journey is far from over.

We still have many people and households without access to electricity, clean water and sanitation, and therefore it is our collective responsibility to work together to better the lives of our people.

Once-more let me re-iterate, that working together we can do more, therefore let us all work together for the benefit of our citizens and future generations.

Let us put on our overalls and boots, and dirty our hands, in our collective quest to improve the lives of our people.

We owe it to those who came before us, those who sacrificed their lives and families so that we can be a free nation.

We owe it to future generations; therefore again working together we can and must do more

Thank you

Kea leboga