



**SPEECH FOR MS B THOMPSON, DEPUTY MINISTER OF ENERGY, AT
THE SWITCH ON FUNCTION RALEMA/NOBODY VILLAGE:
POLOKWANE MUNICIPALITY,
15 JUNE 2012**

Mayor/Councilors of Capricorn District Municipality;

Mayor/Councilors of Polokwane Municipality;

Representatives of Eskom;

Senior Government officials from different spheres of Government;

The people of Ralema and Nobody Village

Good day to all of you!

A Relotsheng!!!

I would like to thank you – the people of Ralema/Nobody - for affording me the opportunity to address you today.

The cold weather that we are currently experiencing is a good reminder of the importance of electricity in the lives of all South Africans. Because as we say, electricity really is LIFE! Without it we struggle to do so many things that others take for granted – like having hot water readily available, being able to cook food for our families with ease, charging our cellphones so that we can stay in touch with

our families and friends wherever they may be. These are simple everyday activities, yet without electricity they become daily challenges.

It is my hope and trust that our presence here at this switch-on event in a humble manner makes a value adding contribution in the lives of the community, and shows government's genuine desire to improve rural areas and turn them into dynamic areas for the sustainable growth of our country.

Through this programme, the Government is saying that instead of people migrating to the big cities in search for jobs and better opportunities; let us develop our rural areas in order for them to reach their full potential.

There is absolutely no reason why the community of Ralema/Nobody villages and the surrounding areas of Polokwane cannot receive the same kind of services that the people who live in the big cities had for decades. The time of spending money on paraffin and candles is over now. We are here to ensure that our children do not study under the cover of darkness but under the light that will be provided by the electricity we are announcing today.

As the ANC government we are working tirelessly to reverse the inequalities of the past. It is our humble belief that this switch-on is an important step in bringing you this basic service - electricity which will enrich and enhance your lives at a personal, social, community and economic level.

In order to bring electricity to historically neglected areas such as you village, we have to make sure there is enough electricity, hence the need to build new power stations and substations. We cannot only rely on coal for electricity generation, but also have to look to other forms of electricity generation like wind, solar, water,

nuclear and waste. In bringing electricity from these generation elements to each and every household, the Department of Energy is ensuring that our Government is getting into the houses of each one. We want to get close to our people and improve their lives so that we can all do more in order for South Africa to become a better country in which we can all prosper.

On Tuesday, we were in the Eastern Cape to celebrate an important milestone in our quest to achieve universal access to energy. On this occasion we marked the 4th million household to be electrified. This is a significant achievement considering the population growth and household growth over the years.

At a more local level, since the inception of the Integrated National Electrification Programme in 2001, Polokwane municipality achieved approximately 22 000 new connections with the assistance of our stakeholder Eskom.

The project that we are launching today has a total value of R 19.2 million. This covers more than 1922 new connections in this village.

We have also started to roll-out grid electrification in Ngwanalaka, Makgaga, Ranoto, Kgole, Ga-Ramongoana and Semenya villages in Polokwane municipality, with over 2000 connection to the value of R20 million rand within this 2012/13 financial year. In the next financial (2013/14) year we are planning to grid electrify about 3500 new households in Polokwane municipal area at a cost of about R35 million rand.

While these are achievements on which we can be proud, we must also understand that not all areas can be reached by grid electricity in the short term, and in those

cases we are also implementing non-grid electrification technologies. Furthermore, the funding for electrification from National Government has to be applied and divided between all backlogs throughout the country.

To complement grid connections, various non-grid systems can also be installed in this municipality. The municipality is welcome to apply with my Department for such assistance, especially for areas that are isolated, where the landscape is very unfavorable for grid electrification or where the nearest electricity point of supply is very far. Such areas qualify for non-grid connections.

While we must celebrate our achievements, we must also accept and understand that we all have a responsibility to use energy efficiently. Each and every household that benefits from the government's roll-out of the electrification programme, have a responsibility to ensure they look after the infrastructure.

I want to appeal to you that each member of the community has to look after the wires and infrastructure that has been installed and are still to be installed. This will ensure that the electricity that has been given to the community today, will still be here when I come back in the not too distant future.

If you see people tampering or stealing your wires please report them immediately to the SAPS. In addition, the Municipality and Eskom cannot repair and upgrade your wires and make sure that there is electricity in the wires if each of you is not paying for the electricity that is consumed. So remember to budget for electricity costs in your weekly or monthly household budget.

In conclusion, Programme Director, it would be wrong for me not to urge all consumers in the country to use energy efficiently. We cannot invest billions of rands in energy generation and processing plants and continue to be blind to the need for all of us to be highly aware of our individual roles in using energy efficiently. PLEASE switch off all appliances when you are not using them.