

**Address by Deputy Minister of Energy, Ms. Barbara Thomson at the official Switch-on
of the Sanele/Mthembeni Village Electrification Project,
Ndwedwe Local Municipality, ILembe District, KwaZulu-Natal
15 November 2013**

Nkosi ye Ndawo
Mayor of ILembe District Municipality,
Mayor of Ndwedwe Local Municipality,
Councilors of Ndwedwe Local Municipality,
Councilors of ILembe District Municipality,
Inkosi yendawo kanye nabo bonke ubuholi bomdabu;
Municipality Manager of Ndwedwe Local Municipality,
Representatives of Eskom,
Government officials from ILembe District Municipality,
Ndwedwe Local Municipality and Department of Energy
The people of Sanele/Mthembeni Village
Good morning to all of you!
Sanibonani!!!!!!

I am delighted to be here today to celebrate the official switch-on of the Sanele/Mthembeni electrification project. I know all of us have very busy schedules and I want to thank each one of you for finding time to join us as we celebrate the successful completion of another important electrification project.

Our presence here is a good reminder of the importance of electricity in the lives of our people. 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 cell phones so that we can stay in touch with our families and friends wherever they may be

Electricity is therefore one of the basic essentials we need to live a more qualitative life.

The official switch-on of this electrification project is part of a broader package of services which this ANC government has consistently delivered to local communities since 1994. These services include better housing, clean drinking water and sanitation, better health care and education.

Our service delivery track record at local government level proves that the ANC is the most consistent vehicle for transformation in our country. I hope all of you have registered on 08-

09 November so that we can once again give a resounding mandate to the ANC in next year's elections to continue on this transformation path.

By making sure the ANC returns as the governing party nationally as well as provincially and in your municipality:

- you will ensure the continuation of the massive infrastructure programme to unlock economic opportunities to create decent work for our people - 18 Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) are in the pipeline which will fast track infrastructure development to transform our economy and create much needed jobs;
- you will ensure the continuation of efforts to improve our public health care system and rebuild dilapidated clinics and hospitals – interventions made by the Health department are yielding results, the tide against HIV and Aids is turning and life expectancy levels of South Africans are increasing;
- you will ensure a government that is committed to transform our neglected rural areas into vibrant communities;
- you will ensure the acceleration of the progressive introduction of free education up to undergraduate level- our education system continues its upward trend. More learners are today in school than at any other time during apartheid and our matric pass rate continues to improve.
- you will ensure that our communities continue to feel safe and secure and our children are protected – we have turned the tide against crime and overall levels of serious crime are decreasing
- you will ensure that you have accountable and responsive councillors who are in touch with their communities and are able to drive transformation and development in their communities.

It is clear for everyone to see that South Africa has, under the ANC seen progress in every sphere of society. Our country and people are far better off than 19 years ago. We have seen progress in every sphere of society through improvements in the roll-out of basic services. Education levels are up and many millions of people now have access to water, electricity, sanitation and housing.

While we must celebrate these gains brought about by the ANC, there is much work that still needs to be done to ensure that the fruits of our democracy benefits more people and

changes their lives for the better. Each one of us has a role to play in this and the Department of Energy will play its part by accelerating the roll-out of our electrification programme. Our presence here is proof of this commitment.

Programme director, in order to bring electricity to Sanele/Mthembeni village, we need to ensure that there is enough electricity network capacity; hence we need to build new power stations, substations and supporting network infrastructure through Eskom and the municipality. I am proud to announce that we have managed to connect 1 369 households.

As part of this electrification programme, Eskom has strengthened the electricity bulk infrastructure (Ndwedwe Substation) to ensure that there is enough capacity to address the households that are still without electricity within Ndwedwe Local Municipality. I want to congratulate the Municipality of Ndwedwe, as well as the people of Sanele/Mthembeni regarding the manner in which they have been waiting patiently for these electrification projects to commence.

However, irrespective of the current electrification projects, there are still about 24 000 households without electricity and we are working closely with Eskom and the Municipality of Ndwedwe to address these backlogs. In the past three financial years the Department has spent almost R112 million to electrify 6 000 households and on the construction of the Ndwedwe substation.

In the financial year of 2013/14 the Department allocated a total amount of R11 million to the Municipality to electrify 950 households within Ndwedwe Local Municipality, and these projects will also create job opportunities to the local people.

Let me conclude by saying that today's event is more than merely a ceremonial switch-on. It is in fact a celebration of the restoration of the human dignity of the communities of Sanele/Mthembeni. It is a celebration of the benefits brought about by freedom under the banner of the African National Congress. It is also a reminder of the countless sacrifices made by South Africans to get us to where we are today.

To honour the sacrifices of these struggle heroes you have an obligation to look after and protect the infrastructure and assets with which you have been provided. Each and every household that benefits from the government's electrification programme, have a responsibility to ensure they look after the infrastructure.

I therefore wish to implore the community of Sanele/Mbebeni to take serious their responsibility to use the electricity they have been provided with efficiently.

Thank you