



**MINERAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**SPEAKING NOTES BY THE HONOURABLE
DEPUTY MINISTER OF MINERAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY
DR NOBUHLE NKABANE (MP)**

**ELDERLY PERSONS PROGRAMME
MPUMALANGA, 27 NOVEMBER 2023**

Programme Director,

Allow me to firstly convey our warm greetings to our elders, whom we have gathered here to honour.

Esteemed Guests and Stakeholders,

Let me start by borrowing from the words of South Africa's first democratically elected President, Isithwalandwe/Seaparankoe, Nelson Mandela who once said, "**A society that does not value its older people denies its roots and endangers its future**".

We are gathered here today not only to handover these gifts to you, but to **celebrate you** and applaud the **role you have played in the development of our country**.

As President Mandela once said, there is no doubt that, the **blood of those who have passed on and your sweat** laid the **foundations of our democracy** and built the country's infrastructure for the benefit of many generations to come after you.

As leaders of today, we look up to for your **individual and collective wisdom** in our endeavours to building a **National Democratic Society** that is people centred, democratic, non-racial, and non-sexist.

In the **recognition of the contributions of older persons**, the World celebrated **the International Day of Older Persons** on the 1st of October this year, at the of which was **scrutinising issues that affect their lives and finding lasting solutions to their problems**.

As the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE), we committed to celebrating with the people of Emalahleni and **enhance your capacity to support yourselves** during this difficult period in your lives.

We know that the current **electricity interruptions**, loadshedding, affects you most, as some of you depend on the electricity to live. I can assure you that government is working day-and-night trying to resolve this issue with the hope of **ending loadshedding in the shortest possible time**.

Despite the difficulty of loadshedding, we are particularly pleased that most you have **access to electricity**, which was a luxury to have for many of our people pre-1994. This government has successfully ensured that at least 92% of the population has access to electricity, up from less than 34% in 1994.

Government continues to provide access to electricity through the **Integrated National Electrification Programme (INEP)**, with over 673 946 households are connected under the 6th administration. Let me reassure that, we will not stop giving our people access to electricity until we realise the goal of **universal access to electricity**.

Cognisant of the fact that most you are affected by **health related challenges**, the DMRE working with various mining companies continues to build and handover world class health centres in our communities for the benefit of our elderly persons.

In the past two years, we handed over **three medical centres** built by mining companies as part of their **Social and Labour Plan (SLPs) projects** in Mpumalanga, namely the Phola Clinic, Rockdale healthcare centre in Middleburg and the Cathyville Clinic in Barberton. This is in addition to **1 749 new clinics built by this government** between 1994 to date, and **56 hospitals** build in the same period, one of which one was recently opened by President Cyril Ramaphosa in KwaMashu, KwaZulu-Natal.

Through the enforcement and implementation of these **SLPs**, which is a license for mining companies to co-exist with mining communities, we intend to build more of these impactful projects, including schools and road infrastructure, in your communities.

As part of government's efforts to **advance social transformation** and in recognition of the fact that the estimated population of people aged 60 and above in South Africa is expected to increase, this government continues to stretch every sinew to **provide comprehensive social protection** to millions of poor and vulnerable people in society. To date, **18 million people in South Africa**, irrespective of their race and gender, **receive one or other form of government grant**.

All these measures, and many others, have enhanced the quality of life and dignity of millions of South Africans, in particular those of elderly persons.

The **DMRE commits to working with other government departments**, municipalities, private sector, and civil organisations on creating convenient communities for all ages without any exceptions. We appreciate that through **joint efforts we can achieve and ensure that people not only live longer**, but also that their lives are better, more diverse, full, and satisfying.

Without further ado, let me take this opportunity to **thank all those who contributed to making this day a success**. You have indeed demonstrated that you **value our elders** and appreciate that older persons are an integral part of the development of our communities.

I thank you.