

KEYNOTE ADDRESS OF HONOURABLE MEC DAWID ROOI ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF VOSBURG-CARNARVON ROAD ON 15 AUGUST 2013.

Programme Director

MEC's present

Executive Mayor

Councillors

HOD's present

All officials present

Members of the media

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Goeie more, Molweni, Good morning.

Ladies and gentleman, we are gathered here today to launch another successful project: the Vosburg-Carnarvon Road. Today is another token of proof that the Northern Cape government brings services to the people and strives towards creating a better life for all.

Programme director, Government has an essential role to fulfill in the vast Northern Cape Province to upgrade gravel roads, as the huge geographical surface poses a tremendous challenge: the enormous task of connecting places would mean more and more roads. The ANC-led government inherited a depleted yellow fleet and a backlog on serviced gravel roads and numerous kilometers of gravel road which still needs to be upgraded. Unlike the pre-1994 administration who by means of the implementation of apartheid created a better life for Europeans only, the ANC-led government does not discriminate, but brings services to all, focusing on the poor, and those living in rural communities.

The project kicked off on 29 November 2010 when the dusty gravel road was handed to the contractor. The upgrading of the 60km road between Vosburg and Carnarvon was an economic injection to both young and old as well as the employed and unemployed. The construction included the reseal and some shoulder repairs on the two surfaced section, namely: 11 kms on Vosburg's side and 15 kms on Carnarvon's side. As a blessing in disguise for our road workers, the project was extended with 2.5 months for work to be completed on the Carnarvon-section, due to bad weather conditions. After an intensive 26 months of hardwork and perspiration the project was completed on 28 January 2013.

Infrastructure development is central to government's strategy for growth – assisting businesses to be more productive; rebalancing our economy. Infrastructure development in sectors of the economy such as agriculture, mining and tourism, enables citizens to travel from one point to another. In addition to stimulating socio-economic development, decent roads also contribute to government's effort to reduce fatalities that continue to claim lives and leave many people disabled.

In South Africa, we lose more than one thousand people every month with severe social and economic consequences. According to statistics, poor road infrastructure is one of the causes of road fatalities in the country.

Building a secure road infrastructure network is therefore one of the priorities of government. We remember the late MEC of Sports, Arts and Culture Mr. Brian Hermanus and his personal assistant Mr. Mervin Erlank who lost their lives on this very road that we have upgraded today. There is no doubt that the investment put into the upgrading of this road will ensure that our people and all road users travel safely to reach their intended destinations. We applaud those who put their time and effort to ensure our safety.

Programme director, as a government we are committed to investing in infrastructure. This is especially true on roads, which are a vital part of people's everyday lives, and the life-blood of any economy. It is a mere fact that transport is crucial to everything we do: getting food to the shops, products to market and people to jobs and their family and friends. When transport slows, everything slows, when it stops, everything stops.

However, as many of you know, our roads have suffered from a lack of funds in recent decades, yet we face the prospect of continually growing traffic in the years to come.

So, good transport is essential to driving sustainable economic growth, prosperity for all, and to making the Northern Cape a great place to live.

It is the vision of the leading party to eradicate poverty, create equality and to create opportunities for employment, fulfilling the vision of creating a better life for all the citizens. The construction of the Vosburg-Carnarvon road impacted positively and directly on the socio-economic status of 133 families. The indirect benefits that this very road will bring to our people are numerous, ranging from shortening of their time on the road to reach their destinations quickly and safely; economic activities and the like.

Ladies and gentleman, government is aware of the challenge of unemployment amongst our youth. In alignment with our responsibility of job creation and the mandate of government to alleviate poverty, we invested a total of R18.5 million employing 65 youth from the local communities.

Ladies and gentleman, this year government commemorates Women's Month under the theme "A Centenary of Working together towards sustainable women empowerment and gender equality." The upgrading of Vosburg-Carnarvon has not only empowered women, but granted them the opportunity to tap into the previously stereotyped men's dusty world of hard labour and construction. It serves me proud to indicate that a total of 19 women was employed and earned a living for their dependents.

For the duration of the project a total of 70 people received training such as building of culverts, installation of fence and guardrails, to name but a few.

One of the success stories of this project worth R202 million, is the story of 30-year old Tumelo Keretsetse from Taung. She studied in one of the scarce professions in this province, namely Civil Engineering. Usually it is expected of university students to undergo practical training and this project was able to accommodate Tumelo in order to obtain the necessary practical experience. Today, we can proudly say that the Vosburg-Carnarvon Road contributed to the development of this particular woman in which was previously known as a male dominated profession. Currently she completed her course and is now pursuing her B-Tech degree at the Vaal University.

Programme director, the Northern Cape government takes its responsibility of contractor development and proving upcoming contractors a business opportunity very seriously. This landmark project is proof of yet another initiative of government not to provide well established contractors with the chunk of business, but to provide several local subcontractors a slice of the cake.

Two established subcontractors completed bulk of the work to the value of R 5 million; while twenty-one SMME's and emerging subcontractors were granted a business opportunity to the value of R40 million.

Programme director, scientists are glad to know that the newly upgraded Vosburg-Carnarvon road will shorten the distance traveling from the capital of the Northern Cape to the SKA-site. Equivalently tourists will also benefit using this road as it is a shorter route traveling from the Diamond City to the Karoo and the Western Cape.

The SKA-site will attract a lot of tourists, scientists and academics to the province impacting positively on SMME'S especially the hotel, catering and accommodation industry.

These benefits clearly portray a better quality of living for members of the community and happier farmers, and optimal working for our essential services. This is also indicative on how good functioning roads and accessibility can strengthen communities.

It is the everyday and lifelong responsibility of the ANC-led government to ensure that our people and roads are safe. I trust that all road-users (including pedestrians) will not be reckless when using this road, but rather be vigilant adhering to the speed limits and traffic rules. Taxi drivers, I plea to you all, the road has been given to us to be of benefit, but the decision solely lies with us how we will utilize it. Let us respect each other as members from different communities, both drivers and pedestrians. I trust that the Vosburg-Carnarvon tar road will mean a safer road and not a speeding road.

Ladies and gentleman, allow me to conclude, I can assure you that this government will continue to work tirelessly improving the infrastructure of our province. It is at this juncture that we can say without any equivocation, that despite the inherited backlog of roads from the pre-1994 administration, we are making strides in reducing the backlog.

We will continue to put the safety of citizens of this province first and enhancing the economy of this province.

I thank you  
Enkosi  
Baie dankie