

Public Works launches ‘*state-of-the-art*’ in-house Conference Centre

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Above: View of the newly renovated conference centre and its parking bays



Above: How the building looked like before renovation



Above: The 1st phase of the centre's interior position



Above: Interior design and artefacts of the current structure with flat plasma screens and the view of the Stage



Above: An interior view of the centre with fitted chairs



Above: The old structure of the eThekweni Conference Centre as shown behind the queue

Friday the 12th of December 2014 marks another milestone for Public Works as MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works, Mr Raviganathan Ravigasen Pillay MPL as he launched and graced the opening of the Public

Works' Conference Centre. The centre is located at the Public Works eThekweni Regional offices in Mayville, Durban.

In his opening remarks, Mr Roger Govender, the Head of Department for Public Works made it quite fathomable that "as the administrative head of public servant department, my task is to marshal the finest at my disposal to deliver on those expectations in tandem with the instructions detailed in the National Development Plan, Provincial Growth and Development Plan and the instructions from our principals." The initiative was indeed well thought of.

The days' order of proceedings comprised of three sessions, the 1st session detailed the arrival, registration and assembling of officials and guests; the 2nd session entailed formal remarks presentations of important governance documents on 'Mid-Term Review and Risk Assessment Status' and revision of the 'Annual Performance Plan (APP)' and the 3rd session detailed official opening of the conference. The visit to the orphanage was in response to the stance by Public Works to supporting the campaigns on "16 Days of Activism on No Violence Against Women and Children", "The International Day for People with Disabilities", "International Human Rights Day" and "International World Aids Day". This visit symbolised a gesture of increasing desire to improving charities that would seek to benefit the vulnerable children in the spirit of *'goodwill and wellness'*. It is quite appreciated that children were showered with a variety of gifts that cuddle them over the festive season and beyond.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Public Works takes pride in its commitment to good governance in respect of prudent utilisation of resources. After several months of continuous work and construction, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Public Works has opened its doors to its newly transformed eThekweni Conference Centre. The building was converted from a no-longer utilized existing concrete shed to a 'state-of-the-art' conference centre in just ten months.

It was an informed decision by management to reduce the increasing number of the state buildings that continuously remain dilapidated. Amongst other credible and paramount reasons to the idea of renovating the centre were the following:

- The hall has been under-utilised and as such has not been functioning optimally because in the main it was used a *'cement shed'*;

- Even though the building was used at times, there were safety standards that were attached to it for compliance which were not adhered to;
- The building was a health risk environment as it had an asbestos roofing, which is health hazard to users;
- The building structure was in totality a risk for people to occupy and or use.

On the basis of the above elucidation an *'executive'* idea came to light in the renovation of the entire building to reconstruct it into a conference centre. The Conference Centre boasts one large conference with a seating capacity of approximately 550 delegates and three other different sized multi-functional commission rooms capable of seating fewer numbers and a Minister's office suite facility. In addition the conference rooms, an entrance foyer, exhibition space, ablutions and minor function catering facilities provided. The conference centre has been designed and built to be disabled access friendly. Adequate parking facilities are also provided for management, personnel, guests and paraplegics. The conference centre is perfectly located close to the highway which makes it easily accessible and convenient for delegates.

In his address, MEC Pillay alluded that "The Project entailed the conversion of what was a derelict concrete pre-cast shed of 1250 square-metres into a state-of-the-art Conference Centre for the eThekweni Region, the broader Department of Works and three other Districts." He further indicated that "We still have to finalise the modalities as to how we will hire this facility to other Provincial Departments, as well municipalities and State-Owned Entities."

With the launch and opening of the conference centre, it is indicative that the building will henceforth serve the following purposes:

- Provide a conducive conference and training venue for the Department of Public Works and other Provincial Departments.
- The infrastructure will assist in the *'cost-cutting'* measures driven by the Provincial Treasury since hiring of private conference venues are alarmingly at high costs.
- The versatility offered by this conference centre will make it one of the most novel options in KwaZulu-Natal for Government Departments to host small and large-scale events to promote Government initiatives.

- The centre will alleviate the backlog of scheduled internal training sessions by relevant structures within the department. Management and personnel will directly and indirectly benefit from its value.

The 3rd session of the programme was a bit '*jam-packed*' with mini activities that involved amongst pertinent others, word of welcome an introduction by of guests by Mr Phiweyo Duma, the General Manager: Corporate Services, the presentation on the Profile, Utilisation and FM Plan by Ms Dudu Fihlela, Regional Manager for eThekweni Region and finally the official unveiling of the plaque by MEC Pillay and the delivery of the vote of thanks by the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Public Works, Honourable Mrs Mbali Fraser.