

**Contribution by the Honourable Neliswa Peggy Nkonyeni
MPL in the Legislature debate on the Honourable Premier's
State of the Province Address, 5 March 2020**

Madam Speaker

Honourable Premier

Honourable Members

“Bhasoba nansi indondemnyama Verwoerd!”

There are few among our generation who might remember that freedom song.

This powerful call to action and activism was composed by the actor, poet, dancer, singer, militant trade unionist, 1956 Treason Trialist, soldier of Umkhonto we Sizwe and hero of the struggle for South African freedom, Cde Vuyisile Mini.

Madam Speaker, we in the African National Congress come from a proud tradition of celebrating and honouring our heroes.

We celebrate them because the long walk to freedom and the path to power were paved by their sacrifice.

Cde Mini made the highest sacrifice to water the tree of freedom when he was martyred by apartheid's hangman at Pretoria Central on 6 November 1964 at the age of 44.

Had this gallant freedom fighter - who became involved in politics at the tender age of 17 in the bus fare and rent increase boycotts in Port Elizabeth - lived to see the fruits of struggle, we would be celebrating his 100th birthday this year.

But Cde Mini does live.

He lives in the flag that flaps proudly in the wind outside this Legislature.

He lives in the child that is fed a hot meal in a secured government school.

He lives in the young mother receiving free high-quality anti-retroviral treatment in a local clinic and whose child is free of infection.

He lives in every active citizen willing to work in building a united, non-racial, non-sexist, equal and prosperous society.

He lives in every capable public servant working to bring about a developmental state.

Cde Mini does not live where we have to hang our heads in shame.

He does not live among the perpetrators of gender-based violence, domestic violence and femicide.

He does not live among those who do crime and those who undermine safety and security in our society.

He does not live among the agents provocateur engaged in wanton destruction of public property in our municipalities and universities.

The Premier in his rousing State of the Province Address committed government to a 365-day awareness and advocacy campaign on gender-based violence.

Let us identify and isolate those who place our girls, our women, our elderly, our disabled and our children at risk.

Our contribution in this SOPA debate is to reflect on the provincial infrastructure development plan and health amongst other issues.

We are energised by the Premier's overarching theme: Together, creating our common future.

We are encouraged by the extended list of eight Provincial priorities identified.

As the Provincial Executive Council collective, we are each committed in our individual portfolios to speedily giving substance to those priorities in the spirit of Khawuleza and radical socio-economic transformation.

The Premier has placed basic services at the top of the list with a focus on clean potable water.

Government has developed a Water Intervention Plan to address water challenges in hotspot areas within the next 18 months.

We are pleased to note that R84-million has been transferred to municipalities to implement immediate interventions.

The water-stressed districts that will benefit include Ugu, uThukela, uMzinyathi, Amajuba, Zululand, uMkhanyakude and Harry Gwala.

We must appreciate the consultative manner in which the Premier has gone about listening to different views of citizens.

We are indeed a caring and responsive government.

We welcome and appreciate the turnaround plan implemented in eThekweni Metro to upgrade electricity

and water infrastructure including the R2 billion Western and Northern aqueduct projects.

Let us be reminded that as a longer-term solution, Government will by June 2020 conclude the Provincial Water Master Plan.

We commend the Premier on the announcement that a significant rollout of telecommunication infrastructure, including broadband networks and digital innovation hubs is underway.

We are pleased that Dube Trade Port will provide over 810 Wi-Fi hotspots at 405 selected sites across the province and that several rural communities are soon to be digitally connected.

#Siyasebenza

The Premier also announced that Public Works would serve as the Province's Infrastructure Nerve Centre that will coordinate and monitor all government infrastructure projects.

That responsibility will ensure that projects are completed on time, within budget and meet quality standards.

The Department's move to reduce the use of private consultants and build its own internal capacity will improve turnaround time.

This gives expression to the ANC Manifesto to address monopolies and structure of the economy. "Central to boosting economic growth and allowing greater participation and empowerment of new entrants in the country's economy is the need to deal with excessive economic concentration and abuse by large corporations and the growth inhibiting structure of the economy."

In Public Works we are committed to breaking the reliance on a few dominant consultants.

Through infrastructure projects, Government is committed to procuring goods and services especially building materials that are locally produced as per the resolutions pertaining to boosting the local and township economies.

The process of developing the Strategic Infrastructure Development Agency (SIDA) as one of the strategic tools for infrastructure delivery is in progress.

The progress in the development of the Provincial Precinct marks a significant milestone in public infrastructure investment.

This is an internally driven process which will give us the benefit of new State assets and drastically reduce the rental expenditure.

We are determined to advance Radical Socio-Economic Transformation and the empowerment of women, youth and disabled people owned emerging enterprises.

This we will do by increasing the reach of Eyesizwe Contractor Development and Siyakha Incubation Programmes.

Whilst noting that EPWP may be a temporary poverty alleviation intervention, the overall objective is two-pronged entailing job opportunities and skills development.

Going forward, EPWP beneficiaries will be assigned in the maintenance of Government buildings and infrastructure.

We are putting systems in place to overcome administrative challenges of the programme.

We are also very pleased at the Premier's announcement that in 2020/2021, Transport will invest R8-billion in infrastructure development and maintenance.

There is positive anticipation around the Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) in particular the Durban-Free State-Gauteng logistics and industrial corridor.

This will link very well with the overhaul of the Durban Port announced by the President.

Another major infrastructure projects in the pipeline will be the SANRAL N3/N2 upgrade project at an estimated cost of R35-billion.

Madam Speaker please allow me to shift gears and reflect on the Premier's pronouncements on health.

Health and development have a necessary correlation.

In the Manifesto the ANC took to our people in the 2019 elections, we made the emphatic commitment to strengthen the public health system to deliver services covered by NHI and not outsource this responsibility.

Consistent with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals on health, our government at every level is fully committed to quality and affordable healthcare for all.

We commend the Premier on the marching orders with regard to, inter alia:

1. Improving the level of service and client experience at our healthcare facilities,
2. The safety of our healthcare workers,
3. Preparations for the implementation of National Health Insurance (NHI),
4. The implementation of the paperless e-health system,
5. The significant inroads in the fight against HIV/AIDS, STIs and under-age pregnancies. It is pleasing to register the significant achievement of the UNAids 90-90-90 target.
6. Support for members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI+) to access healthcare and efforts to mitigate the prejudice, homophobia and violence they frequently face,
7. The firm statement to cooperate with relevant agencies on allegations of forced sterilisation of HIV positive women.

#Siyasebenza

Madam Speaker, we must all be inspired by the level of preparedness of our government nationally and provincially to tackle the potential impact of the coronavirus.

This is the most catastrophic health emergency of the 21st century.

We must urge all our citizens to heed public health warnings to avoid infection.

Needless to say that in our globalised world, whatever the level of preparation we are still at extreme risk.

Madam Speaker, time does not allow me to reflect much further on the infrastructure and health pronouncements made by the Honourable Premier.

It suffices to say that our government has laid on the table a comprehensive plan for the Province during this sixth democratic administration.

We urge all members of this House and all our citizens to lend the necessary support to this programme of action.

As always, our programmes link with the National Development Plan, the Provincial Growth and Development Plan, ANC resolutions and our electoral mandate.

We trust that when the detail of these interventions come up in the budget votes that members of this House will not be restrained in committing their support.

I call on Honourable members to rally behind the Premier's call to together create our common future and honour the memory of heroes like Cde Vuyisile Mini, Mama Winnie Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Harry Gwala, Raymond Mhlaba and many other martyrs of our struggle.

Honourable Premier, we know the Prophets of Doom will be doubting whether the commitments we have made to our people are achievable.

To them we say that just like Cde Mini was asked whether he would raise his fist in salute and shout "Amandla Ngawethu" when he walked the last steps to the gallows, he replied, "Yes" and so too Honourable Premier we must reply emphatically as the ANC-led Government that indeed together, through social compacts we will honour these commitments to our people.

We will grow KwaZulu-Natal together and together we are creating our common future.

I thank you.