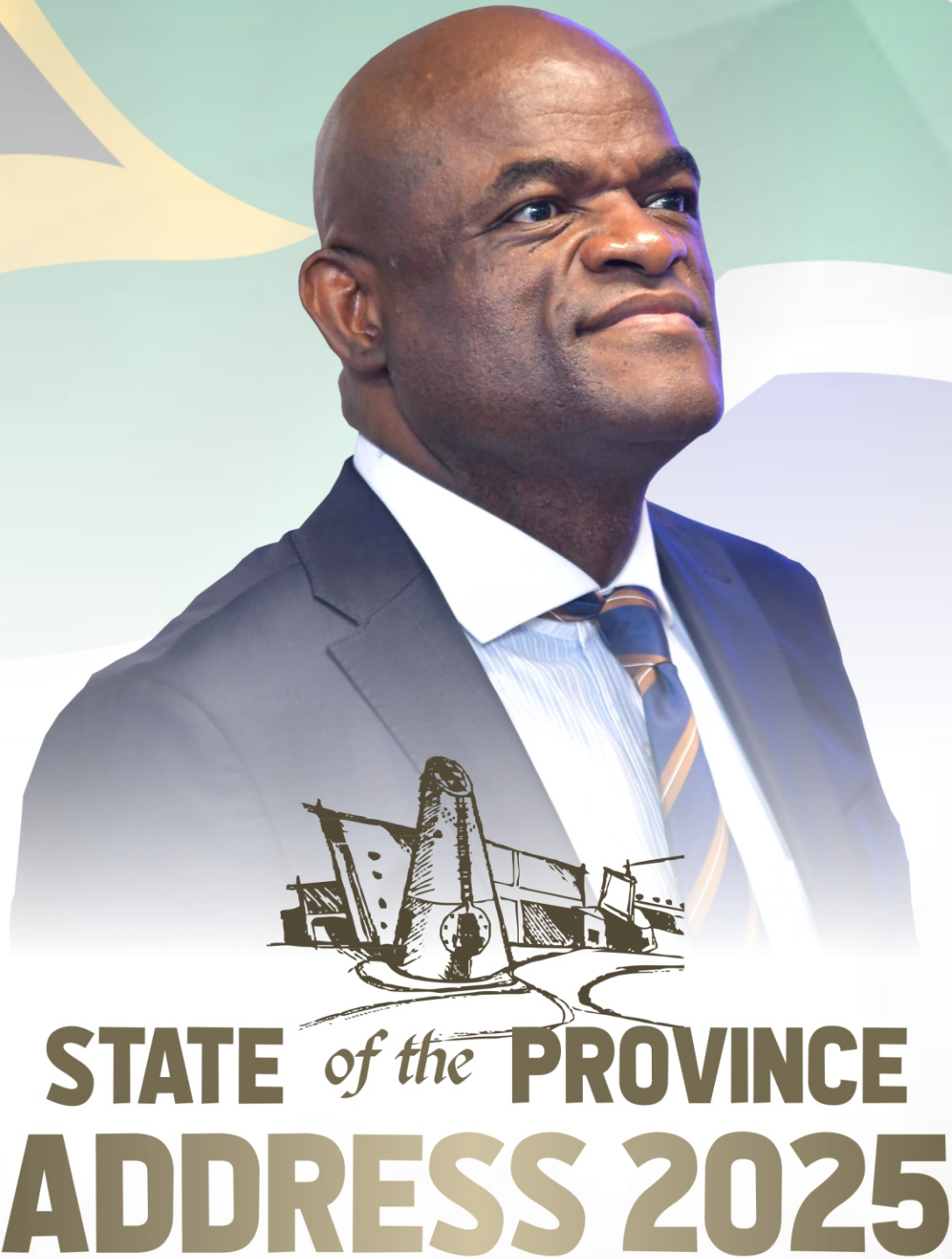




Province of the
Northern Cape
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



STATE *of the* PROVINCE ADDRESS 2025

06 MARCH 2025

MITTAH SEPEREPERE CONVENTION CENTRE. KIMBERLEY



#SOPANC2025

Modern, Growing and Successful Province



**STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE
PREMIER OF THE NORTHERN CAPE, DR. ZAMANI SAUL,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF THE 2ND
SITTING OF THE SEVENTH LEGISLATURE
KIMBERLEY, (SOL PLAATJE MUNICIPALITY)**

6 MARCH 2025

**Speaker of the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature,
Honourable Ms Newrene Klaaste,**

**Members of the Northern Cape Provincial Executive
Council,**

**Deputy Minister for the Department of International
Relations and Cooperation, Honourable Mr Alvin Botes**

The Chief Whip, Honourable Dr Norman Shushu,

**The Chief Whip of the National Council of Provinces,
Honourable Mr. Kenny Mmoiemang**

**The leader of the Opposition, Honourable Mr Harold
McGluwa,**

The Leader of the EFF, Honourable Mr Shadrack Tlhaole,

**The Leader of the Patriotic Alliance, Honourable Ms Sharifa
Ferris,**

**The Leader of the Freedom Front Plus, Honourable Mr
Theodorus Joubert,**

**Members of the National Assembly and the National
Council of Provinces,**

Members of the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature,

**Chairperson of the Provincial House of Traditional
Leaders, Kgosi Pelonomi Toto and all our Traditional
Leaders,**

**Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Consul General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Ms
Helene Rekkers
Consul General of Russia, Mr Aleskei Malenko
Deputy Consul General of the Republic of China, Mr. Tang
Chang'an
High Commissioner for the Kingdom of Lesotho, Ms.
Connie Seoposengwe
Consul General of the United Kingdom, Mr. Lee Coolam
Judge President of the Northern Cape High Court Division,
Judge Pule Tlaletsi,
Heads of State Security Services,
Chairperson of the South African Local Government
Association Northern Cape, Mr Lulama Nkumbi,
Mayors and Councillors,
Heads of State Institutions supporting our Constitutional
Democracy,
The Director General and Heads of Departments &
Government Officials,
Provincial Secretary of the ANC and other political parties,
Leaders of the Alliance & Mass Democratic Movement
Formations,
Leaders of Organised Labour and Civil Society,
Business leaders,
Members of the Media,
Distinguished Guests,
My special guests, the insourced security officials
Fellow citizens of the Northern Cape
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is my distinct pleasure to deliver the first State of the Province Address (SOPA) for this Seventh Administration in Kimberley, the capital city of the Northern Cape. In the heart of the City is the Province's intellectual hub, the Sol Plaatje University. The University is named after Solomon 'Sol' Plaatje, an extraordinary thinker, who spent most of his life fighting for freedom and justice for our people.

This morning **Honourable Speaker**, I was with the MEC of Health for the official opening of the state-of-the-art and modern Nurses Student Accommodation. Presently, the R305 million facility is accommodating 64 students and soon will be operating in full capacity accommodating 320 students. As you all would remember I made announcements in the SOPA of 2020 that work on this project would begin. The second phase of this project, which cost about 500 million, has already begun and entails the construction of lecture rooms, computer laboratory, library, office space, simulation rooms, cafeteria, amongst others.

Honourable Speaker, we present this Address at a time when we are commemorating Human Rights Month under the theme, **“Deepening a culture of social justice and human rights.”** The history of Human Rights Day is grounded in the Sharpeville Massacre on 21 March 1960, where the apartheid police

brutally shot and killed 69 people during a peaceful protest. This massacre exposed the apartheid government's blatant human rights violations. The commemoration of this dark chapter in the history of our country should trigger all of us into action to fight against apartheid apologists, people who desire to reincarnate the privileges and ghost of apartheid.

This year's commemoration of Human Rights Month coincides with the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Freedom Charter. The Charter articulates a vision of a South Africa where all people, regardless of race, would have equal rights and opportunities. It declares that "***South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white,***" challenging the racial foundations of apartheid. We dare not fail in the attainment of this vision.

Therefore, It is in this context **Madam Speaker**, that we welcome the National Dialogue as announced by the President in the State of the Nation Address. As part of contributing to the success of the National Dialogue, we will host an all-inclusive Provincial nation-building and social cohesion dialogue.

Madam Speaker, thirty-five years ago, on 11 February, Nelson Mandela was released from prison, after serving almost three decades behind bars. The release symbolised a significant moment in the political trajectory of South Africa within the global context. It marked the beginning of the end of apartheid

and set the stage for the transition to a democratic and non-racial South Africa. This is the epithet of the freedom that we are all enjoying today.

Madam Speaker, over the last 30 years there have been a number of successes as well as a number of challenges on our path to freedom and justice for our people. These include, amongst others, the economic downturn of 2008, managing a global pandemic namely COVID 19, a surge in Gender-based Violence and Femicide (GBVF), the effects of Climate Change, and an exacerbation of the triple challenges of Unemployment, Poverty and Inequality.

Madam Speaker, this Seventh Administration, must attend to these challenges, with greater urgency and speed. The Government of National Unity (GNU) identified three critical pillars for the next five years for the country, which are:

- Inclusive growth and job creation;
- Fighting poverty by tackling the high cost of living; and
- Building a capable, ethical, and developmental State.

These pillars fit neatly with the vision that was expressed and pursued by the Sixth Administration of building a modern, growing, and successful Province. The Seventh Administration will consolidate this vision and build on some achievements of the past 30 years, which briefly are:

- The proportion of households with formal dwellings increased from 78,3% in 1996 to 85,9% in 2022 in the Northern Cape;
- The proportion of households that have access to onsite piped water (either inside the dwelling or yard) increased from 74% in 1996 to 82% in 2022; the proportion of households that had no access to piped water in the Northern Cape declined from 19,7% in 1996 to 8,7% in 2022;
- The proportion of households that had access to electricity as a main source of lighting, increased from 64,6% in 1996 to 92,5% in 2022; all the municipalities in the Northern Cape have more than 80% of their households having access to electricity as a main source of lighting in 2022;
- The proportion of households in the Northern Cape that have access to flush toilets increased from 52,7% in 1996 to 73,0% in 2022;
- Refuse removed by Municipalities at least once a week increased from 60,2% in 1996 to 67,2% in 2022 in the Northern Cape;
- The internet is a vital resource to access information and to communicate with others. Household's access to the internet from anywhere in the Northern Cape increased from 16.2% in 2010 to 68,5% in 2022

- In terms of land redistribution, a total of R4 Billion has been spent which involves about 2.3 million hectares of land to about 200,000 beneficiaries.

Madam Speaker it is in the same breath that I want to briefly reflect on some of the achievements of the 6th Administration as all these constitute the foundation for the 7th Administration.

- The Province witnessed a R35 Billion economic growth in the 5 years, from R117 Billion in 2019 to R152 billion in 2024
- Last year we recorded a 5 years cumulative expenditure of R24, 7 Billion on infrastructure. This accounts for 19 modern state of the art schools, 11 clinics, roads, libraries, water, bucket toilet eradication.
- The Northern Cape economy created 27 000 new jobs and that placed Northern Cape on the second spot as a province with lowest unemployment. This morning 355 000 people clocked at places of work. The highest ever figure of employment in the history of the province and about 80 000 new jobs from June 2020.
- Over the past 5 years, we have seen a steady growth of our matric pass rate from 66% to 84,19%, this represents an 18% increase.

- In 2019, the Province started with only three clean Audits, today we are proud to report that out of 13 audits the province has recorded 8 clean audits over this period which is proof of good governance and accountability.

Madam Speaker, we are very proud of our past and confident of our future. We are a government that cares and works in service of the people.

Madam Speaker, our commitment to turning the capital city, Kimberley, into an attractive focal point of the province, remains our top priority. Our interventions are primarily aimed at achieving this goal. You may recall that in the State of the Province Address last year, we announced a R2.5 billion Budget Facility for Infrastructure (BFI) funding for the Sol Plaatje Municipality's Bulk Water Infrastructure Refurbishment Program. We are pleased to report that work has begun, we officially launched this project last week on Monday. This is the single biggest investment in water infrastructure in Sol Plaatje. Once completed, this project will ensure that communities in the municipal area will experience better quality of water and almost no water interruptions. During the implementation phase the project will create more than 1000 jobs.

Madam Speaker, last year we also announced the R1 billion Housing Project, which is the single biggest investment in human settlements in the Province. Through phase one of the

R1 billion project, two housing projects are under construction, namely Lerato Park and Jacksonville right here in Kimberley. A detailed town plan for the remainder of Portion 31 of the Farm Roodepan No.70, where the project was launched has been completed. This land portion was purchased for the construction of houses in Roodepan and will yield 400 houses and 6 stands for public amenities and facilities. As part of bringing healthcare services closer to the people, a Community Healthcare Centre for Roodepan and Ritchie are part of our health infrastructure rollout plans.

Madam Speaker, another exciting development for Lerato Park is the appointment of service providers for the Four Hundred and Ninety-one Rectification Project, with an investment value of R42.2 million. Additionally, twelve military veteran units, valued at R5.1 million will be constructed in Lerato Park. Plans are also underway to construct 825 permanent internal services sites and upgrade the informal settlement in Lerato Park.

Madam Speaker, the establishment of the Sol Plaatje University within Kimberley continues to give practical meaning and contribution to our vision of expanding and modernising the capital city. This has already begun to have a significant impact on the economic prospects and development trajectory of this area. The current pace of infrastructure development of the University is an initiative we should all welcome and embrace.

This development will transform Kimberley from a mining city to a university city.

Madam Speaker, what is to be done moving forward? Let me share the plans that we have for the people of this province. Our focus will be based on the Freedom Charter, the Constitution and our five year term. We have concluded our five year plan (2024-2029) which is aligned to the National Plan. The Five Year Plan will guide us into a new phase to build a modern, growing, and successful province.

Honourable Members, health and education, still remain our apex programmes. We will vigorously work to improve on the achievements we made in both the health and the education sectors. The National Senior Certificate (NSC) results remain one of the key performance indicators. The incremental improvements in the matric results are due to the intentional investment in the education system.

Madam Speaker, Early Childhood Development is a cornerstone of a thriving society. By nurturing during the formative years, we set them for a brighter future. To Invest in ECD is not just a moral imperative but it is a strategic decision that yields lifelong benefits for the province. We will, therefore, introduce new initiatives to professionalise this very important sector.

Madam Speaker, we are mindful of the challenges that confront the education sector. We continue to work tirelessly to ensure that the education sector functions optimally. Despite the current fiscal challenges we are committed not to retrench any teachers which is a clear commitment to the sector. There has been an increase of over 900 teachers over the past five years.

It is in this spirit that as a Province we welcome the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Act. This legislation will transform the education sector to improve governance, accountability and quality of education in general.

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members, as we strive towards a modern, growing, and successful province, it is important that we engage our university to foster local knowledge creation, innovation, and human capital development for our economic, social, and cultural development. The university is a catalyst to shape our society, foster innovation, drive economic development and support our participation in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Sol Plaatje University (SPU) remains a strategic partner to advance research and innovation in the province. With 13 nationally accredited researchers, SPU has significantly enhanced the Northern Cape's scientific and technological capabilities. The university's world-class Library and Central

Auditorium continue to position the province as a hub for knowledge and innovation. We are excited that this year the University had a record enrolment of 7 000 students with a future target of 9 940 students by 2030.

For the 2025 academic year, we have close to 300 bursary beneficiaries at a total cost of about R17 million. The bursaries are awarded in line with the Provincial Human Resources Development Strategy, which will address the skills mismatch and the shortage in the Province. In order to optimally attain this our primary focus is on the following fields of studies; Agriculture, Computer Sciences, Engineering, Science, Law, Commerce, Education, Fine Arts, Humanities and Health Sciences.

We have also pioneered financial support for 15 students in the "Access for Success" University Preparation Programme in Duin-in-die-Weg in the !Kheis Municipality. This enables disadvantaged learners to pursue studies in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

Honourable Members, on the 14th of March, we will host the Premier's Golf Day 2025, the proceeds of this initiative will be directed towards the Premier's Bursary Fund. We therefore make an appeal to all businesses in the province to support this

generous initiative, which gives opportunities to children from poor backgrounds. But not only that, the event is a perfect platform to network for businesses in the province. For this year's event we are already fully subscribed.

Madam Speaker, we will continue with our work to equip the people of our province with the necessary skills to build a capable workforce to drive economic transformation. To achieve this, various skills-driven initiatives are implemented to support the attainment of this goal.

During my inaugural address I highlighted the fact that we launched some impressive programmes with the merSETA and the serviceSETA. And later with UIF at a total cost of R800 Million to benefit about 26 000 unemployed youth.

Just as a recap **Madam Speaker**, the MerSeta programme comprises a skills development and bursary programme to the amount of R210 million benefiting 2,000 unemployed youth. The servicesSETA in the Province amounts to over R45 million benefiting 755 young people. The Labour Activation Programme through the UIF fund of the Department of Employment and Labour contributes a total investment of R725 million benefiting 23 000 unemployed young people in the Province.

I am pleased to report that we have made significant progress to date;

- The Implementation of these projects started in 2024, and to date, 403 learners have been enrolled to participate in these skills training initiatives.
- Training of youth will continue with the enrolment of 800 new beneficiaries during 2025 in the following programmes: Shielded Metal (Arc Welder), Electrical Engineering, Transport, Electrical Engineering – Chemical / Renewable Energy and Mechanical Workshop Assistant. Engagements are continuing with possible employers for placement after completion of the training.
- To date the Labour Activation Programme has recruited 11 038 unemployed young people. These young people are currently in training programmes that cover sectors such as construction, enterprise development, ICT, agriculture, security, mining, and hospitality over a period of three years.

Madam Speaker, to ensure that our economy has the requisite skills, we emphasise increase in production of artisans through our TVET Colleges. We have established the Provincial Skills Development Forum to enhance the effectiveness of TVET

colleges in the Northern Cape. This Forum will align training with labour market needs, fosters Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for workplace-based learning and advocates for increased funding and resource mobilisation.

Madam Speaker, the health sector remains one of the key drivers to reduce morbidity, mortality, poverty and to ultimately improve the general well-being of our people. Over the years, the overall healthcare system in the province has improved significantly. A total of 87% of Northern Cape households continue to use our public health system. It is against this background that we find the recently enacted National Health Insurance Act as a necessary instrument to realise universal access to quality health care.

The health profile in the Province has gradually improved over the years. Life expectancy for both males and females continue to increase. Specifically, the life expectancy for males rose from 50.1 years in 2001 to an anticipated 59.5 years by 2026. For females, life expectancy increased from 54.3 years in 2001 to a projected 66.0 years in 2026.

Madam Speaker, we are concerned about the high prevalence of teenage pregnancy in the Province. It is for this reason that an inter-ministerial team was established in order to attend to this challenge. The intervention of the Inter-ministerial team

resulted in a decrease from 3 817 incidents in 2019 to 3 538 incidents in 2024.

Madam Speaker, we are in the process to finalise a comprehensive Food Security Plan for the province to give the poor and the vulnerable access to nutrition. We plan to pilot a Food Bank Model as a provincial-wide food supply mechanism to provide food to Nutrition Centres that run soup kitchens.

Madam Speaker, the Northern Cape's economy has experienced notable shifts over the past five years, influenced by its reliance on mining, agriculture and emerging opportunities in renewable energy and infrastructure development. From 2019 to 2024, the provincial GDP grew steadily, rising from R117 billion in 2019 to R158 billion in 2023. This growth reflects resilience amidst global and domestic challenges, which includes the COVID-19 pandemic and persistent infrastructure challenges.

According to Stats SA, the mining sector remains the backbone of the Northern Cape's economy, which contributes 17.3% to the provincial GDP in 2023. The fluctuating commodity prices and logistical constraints caused a decline in mining output in 2022 and 2023.

Agriculture also plays a vital role, which contributed over R11 billion to the GDP in 2023, this amounts to 7%, supported by high-value crops and initiatives such as the Vaalharts Irrigation Scheme. Despite this, employment in agriculture faced a sharp decline of 38.9% between quarter 2 of 2023 and 2024. This was exacerbated by climate challenges and global market volatility.

The tertiary sector accounted for 57.2% of the provincial GDP in 2023, with trade, finance, and government services leading the way. The construction sector, though facing challenges such as rising costs and project delays, showed optimism with a 23.8% increase in building plans passed in 2024, particularly in urban areas like Kimberley.

Madam Speaker, employment in the Northern Cape experienced a positive growth trajectory in Q4: 2024, increasing from 337,000 jobs in Q3 to 355,000 in Q4, this reflects a 5.2% quarter-to-quarter growth and an 8.5% year-on-year increase. This makes the Northern Cape one of the fastest-growing provinces in terms of employment percentage change.

Madam Speaker, the key industries that contribute to employment gains included the finance sector, which grew from 37,000 in Q3 to 49,000 in Q4, and the trade sector, which experienced a rise from 54,000 to 58,000. The mining sector remained stable at 39,000 employed individuals, while

manufacturing saw an increase from 9,000 to 11,000. The agriculture sector rebounded from previous declines, increasing employment to 52,000, which aligns with seasonal demands and higher agricultural output.

Madam Speaker, the province's expanded unemployment rate, which includes discouraged work-seekers, also fell from 43.1% in Q3 to 39.7% in Q4. This is the highest decrease in expanded unemployment in six years. This demonstrates improvement in the labour force absorption. However, the relatively high expanded unemployment rate indicates that a substantial number of individuals remain on the margins of economic activity.

Madam Speaker, in line with the country's ambitious national target of creating 2.5 million jobs by 2030, the province is committed to contributing its fair share by generating at least 60,000 sustainable jobs within the next five years. With the 60 thousand jobs we are likely to reduce official unemployment to below 20%.

We are now busy developing a Northern Cape 60 000 Jobs Plan 2025-2029. The Jobs Plan will serve as a roadmap for growth, guided by the principles of innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability. It focuses on unlocking opportunities in priority sectors; such as, mining, agriculture, renewable energy, manufacturing, tourism, and the ocean economy.

Madam Speaker, in line with the Cannabis Masterplan which guides commercialisation of cannabis production in the country, the Province has allocated an amount of **R12, 850 million** for the establishment of the Hemp Nursery and Coning Centre as part of the Hemp Production Project. This project is expected to assist with seedling supply to address hemp seed shortage in the country. As it grows this project is planned to bring on board 159 farmers with a total of 318 hectares and create jobs.

As part of transforming the agricultural sector an amount of **R924 million** was spent in support of emerging black farmers in the past 5 years. The type of support includes infrastructure development for livestock farmers; production inputs; training and marketing as well technical support.

Furthermore, through the provincial shared services centre, we spent an amount of **R256 million** in 29 projects aimed at supporting emerging black farmers. This means in total **R1,2 billion** was spent in support emerging black farmers.

In terms of land redistribution, a total of R4 Billion has been spent which involves about 2.3 million hectares of land to about 200,000 beneficiaries. The Expropriation of Land Act will, to a major extent, facilitate a structured and systemic allocation of land to disadvantaged groupings and individuals. This

progressive and transformative piece of legislation will address the gross inequalities of the past.

Honourable members, the Northern Cape Industrial Corridor, anchored by the Boegoebaai Port and Rail Development together with the Boegoebaai Green Hydrogen (GH2) Development Programme, has been identified as a game-changer and would be a strategic asset. This initiative aligns with the National Government's R940 billion infrastructure rollout plan announced by the President in the State of the Nation Address. We will leverage both public and private sector investment to position the province as a key node in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The designated Namakwa SEZ supported by the Kathu and Uptington Industrial Parks will strategically position the Northern Cape as a new growth point for the Country. The Namakwa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is making significant progress and detailed designs for the bulk infrastructure are underway. The infrastructure build programme will be subjected to a Budget Facility for Infrastructure application to the National Treasury in the next 12 months.

Construction is set to begin by 2027/28, marking a key milestone in the region's economic development. The SEZ is expected to create 2,000 jobs in its initial phase, with

employment rising to 9,000 during peak construction and operation.

Honourable members, our focus is to ensure that the mining sector remains competitive, sustainable, and integrated into the green economy. The Northern Cape will actively support the Energy Action Plan by fostering an ecosystem where electron-based, renewable power and green hydrogen industries thrive. Through alignment of the Northern Cape's infrastructure and industrial development strategy with the national agenda, the province will be better positioned to be a leader in green energy transition, and regional trade integration.

The recent proclamation of the Tier 1 for Port Nolloth and Tier 2 harbours (Honderklipbaai and Kleinzee) on our coastline, marks a significant step in unlocking the province's fisheries and aquaculture potential, driving local economic growth and job creation in coastal communities. These harbours will provide critical infrastructure to support small-scale fishers, commercial aquaculture ventures, and value-added seafood processing. This augurs well for sustainable marine resource utilization.

Honourable Members and esteemed guests, the Upington International Airport presents a major opportunity to enhance our connectivity and trade logistics. We are in discussions with Airports Company South Africa (ACSA) to maximize the

airport's potential. This will ensure that the Northern Cape is accessible by sea, air, and land. This will open new pathways for international market access. ACSA has made a commitment to develop the Aviation Park as well as maintenance, repair and overall upgrade of old aircraft.

Madam Speaker; our export promotion efforts have been further strengthened through a Memorandum of Understanding with Raisins SA. This partnership aims to increase export values by 55%, to reach new levels of R1.8 billion by 2030. We have also supported SMME participation in international trade exhibitions, enhancing their market access and expanding their global presence.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are at an advanced stage with the development of the provincial strategy for mining and mineral value chains. Added to this, we have also initiated a process to identify critical minerals with a high probability for local beneficiation and currently, we have commissioned a pre-feasibility study for granite beneficiation in the province.

Madam Speaker, Eskom is a major player in achieving these outcomes. I am therefore pleased to inform this house, that this period would be marked by major infrastructure investments by Eskom. The Three Capes region will contribute 37GW of the national 38GW renewable target, supported by:

24 new substations

53 additional transformers
7 synchronous condensers
3,655 km of 400kV transmission lines
6,850 km of 765kV transmission lines

These investments will be crucial to unlock renewable energy potential and strengthen South Africa's power grid.

Madam Speaker, improved road infrastructure is the province's priority. We are extremely excited by the development around the provincialisation of SANRAL. This development will see a total investment of R7.2 billion in road infrastructure projects over the next three years. Through years of engagement with SANRAL by the Sixth Administration, SANRAL will open their Provincial Offices here in Kimberley from 1 April 2025.

It should be noted that since the advent of the Sixth Administration, we have allocated R 25 billion to infrastructure, which includes clinics, schools, libraries, roads and human settlements. This massive investment in social and economic infrastructure in the Province has led to growth in the economy and the creation of much needed jobs for our people.

In addition, the construction of much-needed houses through the R 1 Billion Housing project that we launched last year to build 4143 houses will be expedited. The initial phase of the project which will yield 2500 houses throughout all the five districts in the Province has commenced. The second phase of

the project will commence as soon as the initial phase of the project has been completed. The final phase of the project will yield 1643 houses at a total value of R 400 million.

Madam Speaker, through our partnership with Vedanta Zinc International an Oncology Treatment Facility will be established in Springbok in the Namakwa District to the Value of R22 million. The project is expected to be completed in December this year.

Honourable Members, the Department of Water and Sanitation is in discussion with Namibia over improving the yield of the Orange River. The construction of a dam in the Lower Orange River near Vioolsdrift has been identified in joint planning studies conducted with Namibia as a most viable alternative to increase the available water yield from the Orange River. The site lies on the common border between South Africa and Namibia and is envisaged as a joint development that would serve the projected needs of both countries. The estimated completion date for this project is the 2029/30 financial year.

Honourable Members, Thus far we have successfully completed the R1. 7 billion first phase of the Vaal Gamagara Water Supply Scheme. Through this phase about 6 000 water users are now assured of reliable water supply into the future.

The main water users in the area include the various mines, municipalities, agricultural sector and Transnet.

Honourable members, we continue to support and commend the private-public partnership between Vaal Central Water Board, the Mining Leadership Forum (MLF) and the Department of Water and Sanitation to commence the R 10 billion second phase of the Vaal Gamagara Water Supply Scheme. In addition to this, over the next five years a total investment of R 5.5 billion will be allocated to municipalities for water and sanitation projects through the infrastructure grants.

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members, with all these infrastructure development interventions, we are in the process to finalise our Provincial Infrastructure Master Plan 2040. This Plan will serve as a strategic blueprint to direct infrastructure development in the Northern Cape. Through the identification of key priorities, streamlining resource allocation, and fostering intergovernmental collaboration. The Master Plan, will also ensure that infrastructure projects are not implemented in a fragmented manner but contribute meaningfully to the broader developmental goals of the province.

Central to the effective execution of this Master Plan is the Infrastructure Development Monitoring Tool. This is a critical mechanism designed for real-time tracking down of progress in

the implementation of infrastructure projects across the province.

Madam Speaker, over the past five years, the Province created 95 689 job opportunities as part of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Phase Four. The EPWP is comprised of three areas namely, Infrastructure, Social, Environmental and Cultural, and Municipalities. 5% of all the EPWP projects include a training component which is related to the nature of the project. The EPWP is currently in Phase Five of its implementation and over the next five years we pledge to create 112 995 work opportunities.

The Community Works Programme (CWP) programme currently provides 18 468 job opportunities for vulnerable target groups which include youth, Women and Persons with disabilities. The CWP is operational in all 26 local municipalities of the Province.

Honourable Members, through the insourcing of security officers, we have created additional jobs, subsequently reducing the unemployment figures in our Province. Over the next three years an additional two thousand 2000 security officials will be insourced, creating the much-needed reliable jobs for the people of the Northern Cape. This function is managed by the Department of Transport, Safety and Liaison.

Honourable Members and the People of the Northern Cape, the rationalisation of our economic development institutions marks a significant step toward a more efficient and investor-ready province. The integration of NCEDA and NCTA is not merely a consolidation but a strategic move to create a powerful economic engine that drives tourism, trade, and catalytic projects while unlocking investment opportunities.

With a newly appointed Board, the governance of NCEDA is strengthened. Key milestones have already been achieved, including the alignment of financial systems, payroll systems, and the adoption of shared office spaces.

Madam Speaker, the Sixth Administration placed a strong emphasis on good governance. The clean audit initiative was resuscitated with the primary objective of improving the accountability ecosystem in the province.

Madam Speaker, we agree with the President as he stated in the SONA that a capable state must start where people live and work. The challenges in our municipalities relate to good governance practices, lack in technical skills and resources, aligning and aging infrastructure, and poor maintenance.

Our main focus is therefore to continue building capable local government. It is important for us to consistently implement transparent and merit-based recruitment for senior management roles to ensure a professional local government.

It is encouraging to note that all five District Development Model Plans have been reviewed.

During this year we plan to convene a Local Government Summit to unpack the challenges and constraints that hamper service delivery. The summit will guide the development of an implementable programme of action aimed to turn around the state of our municipalities.

Honourable Members; the role of traditional leadership does not exist in isolation; it is complementary to the broader governance structures of our province. In partnership with local and provincial government, traditional leaders ensure that the voices of rural and marginalised communities are heard and represented. To further enhance the role of traditional leadership, we decided last year to grant proper recognition to our Traditional Leaders. This resulted in us elevating all eight Dikgosi from Senior Traditional Leaders to Principal Traditional leaders and elevating all Headmen to Senior Traditional Leaders.

Madam Speaker, we are heartened by the progress in the fight against crime. The statistics over the past three quarters show that the province is on a downward trend compared to the same period a year ago. Whilst there has been a slight 2.1% decline in reported rape cases, with 321 incidents recorded, this figure remains far too high. A closer examination of the

data reveals that more than 58 of these cases were linked to domestic violence, and an overwhelming majority of rape incidents occurred within residences, whether those of the victim or the perpetrator.

We need to send out a strong message to all perpetrators of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, that we will not sit idle whilst heinous crimes are being committed in our communities. We will act harshly to eliminate the scourge of GBVF.

Madam Speaker, the relationship between GBVF and women's empowerment is cyclical and interdependent. In our effort to address GBVF it is important to achieve women's economic empowerment.

Our commitment to inclusive economic growth in the Province requires us to harness every avenue to ensure that public procurement uplifts all sectors of society, especially our vulnerable groups—women, youth, and people with disabilities.

During the 6th Administration, our public procurement spend within the province stands at 38%. To date **R5.3 billion** (17% of the total public procurement) was spent on women-owned businesses. These figures underscore the work ahead as we strive for a truly inclusive economic landscape.

Honourable Speaker, to strengthen our effort in the fight against Gender Based Violence and Domestic Violence the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) has established five (5) Community prosecution sites in Galeshewe (Phutanang), Kuruman (Bankhara), De Aar, Upington (Kalksloot) and Kimberley. The goal is to create proactive partnerships between the community, law enforcement, prosecution and public and private organisations.

This effort will be bolstered by the appointment of 27 social workers in April this year. This will enable the Department to strengthen services, especially to children. This will ensure that social workers are linked, not only with hospitals and police stations but also with schools.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members, Ladies and Gentlemen, through innovations such as mobile connectivity, solar power, and digital education platforms, technology can provide rural communities with access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. For instance, telemedicine can remotely connect patients with doctors, reducing the need for long travel distances. Similarly, online learning platforms can offer quality education to students regardless of their location. By harnessing these technological advancements, rural areas

can experience significant improvements in quality of life, economic development, and social inclusion. We have approved the establishment of a Provincial Information Technology Shared Services Centre as a mechanism to deploy the expertise required and to implement technologies for digital transformation to improve service delivery.

Furthermore, to modernise and streamline government processes, we have successfully implemented the e-Leave and e-Submission systems in four departments, namely the Office of the Premier, Provincial Treasury, COGHSTA and the Department of Economic Development and Tourism. These digital platforms represent a critical shift towards a more efficient and responsive government, reducing paperwork, enhancing workflow, and enabling real-time tracking and approvals.

In the new financial year, we will expand these systems to all departments within the Northern Cape Provincial Government. This will support a fully digitalised government that is better equipped to provide efficient services to our citizens.

Madam Speaker, the piloting of coding and robotics at one hundred and seventy-three (173) schools was concluded in 2024. Full implementation of coding and robotics in Grades R to Grade 3 will take effect in 2026. During the 2025 academic

year, we will prepare all teachers and schools for full implementation in Grades R to 3.

Madam Speaker, through focused partnership efforts in key areas, of education and health we have together with our Cellular network providers such as Vodacom, MTN and Telkom expanded our digital footprint. Additionally, the investment in broadband and base station infrastructure by our operators, Vodacom, Telkom and MTN, stands at well over R1 billion.

In the realm of digital connectivity, the SA Connect initiative continues to make strides under Phase Two. To date, 112 additional sites have been installed through the support of USAASA, and 83 of these sites are now WiFi-enabled. This means that surrounding communities can now access much-needed internet connectivity, empowering them with opportunities for education, entrepreneurship, and access to critical services.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is with great enthusiasm that I also update you on the progress of the transformative Square Kilometre Array (SKA) initiative which is instrumental in advancing our technological capabilities and bridging the digital divide in our country.

The implementation of the SKA project has gained momentum, with a significant milestone already achieved. The first SKA dish has been successfully synchronised with the MeerKAT

array, marking a major step forward in South Africa's contribution to global scientific innovation. We are set to implement four additional SKA dishes in the 2025/26 financial year, in our quest to further enhance our capacity in radio astronomy and deep space exploration. In the next four years Government will spend R4.5 billion to deliver the SKA construction commitments. The construction of the planned visitors centre in Carnarvon which amounts to R142 million will commence in June this year.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I would like to emphasise the importance of working together for the people of the Northern Cape. Our focus should not only be on the monetary projects, but also on our People who need to drive and benefit from development initiatives.

Madam Speaker, no conclusion would be complete if I did not offer my deep sense of gratitude to my political home, the African National Congress which shaped and nurtured my political outlook. I would also like to thank all the people of the Northern Cape for their ongoing encouragement and trust in this Provincial Government which I have the good fortune to lead.

To my colleagues, the Members of the Executive Council and members of the Provincial Legislature let us continue serving the people of the Northern Cape, irrespective of race, colour or political affiliation.

Lastly, I express my eternal thanks to my mother and my siblings for their support over the years. Bravo to my wife and children for her unending and unwavering support.

Thank you