

Briefing by MEC for Local Government and Housing on the Release of the Advocate Mahlangu Report

10 March 2006

Programme Director;
Advocate Lazarus Mahlangu;
Representatives of the Office of the Provincial Commissioner of Police
The Head of Department in the Local Government and Housing, Mr Leshabe Rampedi;
Officials from the Housing SBU of our Department;
Members of the media;
Ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning.

In order for any organization to deliver and achieve the goals it has been set up for, it is extremely necessary that effective and efficient systems and structures are put in place.

Under challenging circumstances, and indeed within a very brief period of around six months, the Task Team made its investigations and concluded its Report. The Final Report was presented to the Department in March 2005, whereby we, as a Department, immediately undertook the task of implementing the useful recommendations that were required of us.

We publicly announced the findings of the Report and further distributed the Executive Summary within the same month. Substantive details were referred to relevant bodies and sections within our Department for further investigation and action.

Programme Director

It is with certainty, confidence and pride that we can say that indeed since the reception of the Report, much has been done by the Department to ensure that we are placed on a stronger path to achieve the tasks we have been given by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

One of the main recommendations made by the Task Team was that the Department needed to set up strong systems and structures which will be able to combat any attempts at fraud and corruption within its programmes – housing included.

These include the crucial process of restructuring the Department and capacitating the units with adequate personnel and skills in order for those units to become more responsive to the mandate of the Department and the communities of Limpopo.

This process involved the revising of the organizational structure, embarking on a detailed skills audit, strengthening the Department's information and records management and giving communication the priority it deserves. We are concluding

this process and officials will be deployed to areas within the Department where they are most suitably skilled and required.

Programme Director

We have also seen fit that we tighten the contracts which we enter into with our housing developers. This is because, as the Report shows, some of the contractors who worked for us exploited the weaknesses within our contracts and ended up either not completing their work and/or building houses which were of seriously questionable quality. In fact, others – realizing the loopholes within the system – went as far as billing the Department for work that was not done, and expected to be paid for houses which were never on the ground. We have since taken those whom we have satisfied ourselves that they did not do their job and claimed fraudulently monies from the Department to task and two are currently facing criminal and civil charges in our courts. In one of the cases, a developer claimed R4m for houses not built. In another, R56 000 was paid but later recouped by the Department. Having recouped the money the Department has referred the matter to law enforcement agencies for further action.

We will also, before the end of June, be setting up a toll-free number where all the members of the public can raise their complaints on housing and allows us an opportunity to prevent cases of poor or shoddy workmanship. The toll-free office will be manned by officials who are knowledgeable on housing matters and will be able to direct the public issues to the correct sections within the Department.

These are among some of the steps we have taken over the year and have spoken at length about on numerous platforms. The process of implementing all the recommendation in the Report is not an event; rather it is a long journey that is aimed at making us work better for our people and ensure that the majority of our people enter with us into the New Age of Hope.

Programme Director

It must be stressed that ours is not a Department with judiciary powers. Those are the powers vested in the courts of law. By this we mean that if allegations are made within this Report, it is not the responsibility of the Department to judge – rather we must take the allegations to the authorities that are better able to investigate and make judgment on whether there is a case for individuals to answer to or not. We believe that this is what was done and we would like to thank Advocate Mahlangu and his team for a job well done. We are certain that history will prove this route to have been the best strategy to help build a better Department which is able to deliver on its mandate of building better communities.

I thank you.