

REMARKS BY PREMEIR THABANG MAKWETLA ON THE OCCASION OF THE PUBLICATION OF THE 2004 MPUMALANGA MATRIC RESULTS

Programme Director

Honourable MEC for Education Siphosizwe Masango

Members of the Executive Council and the Mpumalanga Legislature

Mayor of Mbombela Municipality Councillor Regina Mhaule

Umalusi CEO Dr Peliwe Lolwane

Associations of School Governing Bodies

Leaders and members of the trade union movement and learner formations

Officials from the National and Provincial Departments of Education

Members of the media

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the Department of Education, UMalusi and the Mpumalanga Department of Education for getting to the core of the problem and, after diligent work, releasing the final Mpumalanga Matric results.

Over the past three years the Provincial Executive Council has taken keen interest in the challenges confronting education in Mpumalanga. Extra-ordinary measures were employed to minimise weaknesses in our education system, by among others, the paying of regular visits to schools on a fortnightly basis. These concerted efforts significantly improved the resource-shortages by jerking up logistical support to our schools. The Executive committee members had first hand information about problems in our schools and on a fortnightly basis shared with our school managers views on how some of these challenges could be overcome.

All these efforts are because the Mpumalanga Administration has a full appreciation of the place education occupies in the struggle to realize freedom for our people. This commitment is not about to change. Nothing will deter us. In time the results of these efforts must and will show.

Programme Director, on behalf of the provincial government, I wish to thank and commend the marker who blew the whistle about this irregularity, for her spirit of courage and civic duty. Honest citizens are those who do what has to be done when it needs to be done.

The Mpumalanga Province sympathises with and apologises to the thousands of hard-working matriculants and their parents who endured anxious days and weeks waiting for these results. This inconvenience is indeed regrettable. We commend them for their extreme patience and understanding.

It is our sincere hope that all of us - the Department of Education, educators, parents, learners and the community at large - will walk away from this debacle wiser and more determined never again to allow a repeat of such corruption in our education.

This crisis offers the province the opportunity to improve our monitoring and supervisory mechanisms to device an examination process which is beyond reproach this year and in the years and decades ahead.

We must all commit ourselves to maintaining academic integrity throughout our institutions of learning. Academic dishonesty is a serious offense that has the potential of diminishing the quality of our academic environment, the academic reputation of our schools, and the quality of our results and certificates.

The province is immensely proud of all those sincere, truthful and upright learners who have displayed a high level of discipline, integrity and hardwork in their studies and in their exams. They have made themselves, the province, their families and their communities extremely proud.

It is our fervent hope that as they venture into other avenues, the knowledge that they will gain will enrich the Human Resource pool that we as a province can tap in.

We also hope that apart from aiming for academic excellence, they will and must play a leading role in finding solutions to the major challenges that face our province and our country.

To those who have been unsuccessful, the time not to give up is now. The fact that they are compelled to repeat their studies, is to them an opportunity to show courage, determination and the will to triumph against all odds. Remember that you can keep going long after you think you can't.

We call upon all our educators to do everything possible to support and assist these children so that at the end of this year we can put back a smile on their faces while further reducing the failure rate.

The Mpumalanga Department of Education will provide support, advice, counseling and coaching to all those learners who have been disadvantaged by this crisis.

The department will link these learners with Institutions of Higher Education and provide them with information on how they can access data on bursaries. The Department will provide this service through the toll free line number **0800 203 116**.

Ladies and gentlemen this crisis compels us to steel our resolve to succeed and to learn that there are no shortcuts in life. We hope that every one of us, especially all the authorities responsible for the running of exams, including Umalusi, have learnt something from this debacle.

We remain supportive of the wisdom of the National Department of Education to have a supervisory body taking care of matters of propriety of the examination process. I

It is our considered view and wish that in future UMalusi would have the capacity to pick up any irregularities quickly and act swiftly without undue delay in resolving issues such as the one we had.

UMalusi must discharge her duties as a part of the marking process, to ensure propriety, rather than **post facto** intervention.

For our part, the Mpumalanga Provincial Government undertakes to make sure that where censure and punitive measures are expected to be taken against those who are beyond any doubt culprits in this whole saga, we will do so sternly, speedily and without hesitation in order to ensure that there is no recurrence of such a matter.

I thank you.