

**BRIEF REMARKS BY PREMIER TSP MAKWETLA AT THE SAPS PROVINCIAL SERVICE EXCELLENCE AWARDS  
Nelspruit, Thursday 07 July 2005**

Programme Director;

The MEC for Safety and Security, MEC D Pule;

MEC's;

Speaker;

Chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders;

The Deputy Provincial Commissioner of SAPS, Comm Nick o'Kelly;

The HOD of the Department of Safety and Security, Mr Ndaba Mkhize;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am once again honoured to participate in this special ceremony where we recognise police stations that are among the best in our province and to honour the public servants at these stations who had collectively given excellent customer service over the past year.

Programme Director, allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate the MEC for Safety and Security, MEC Dinah Pule, and through her the task team at the Kanyamazane Police Station under the leadership of Superintendent Sithole, comprising Inspectors M J Mbuyane and T A Thwala, Sergeant D T J Lekhuleni, and Constables T F Lekhuleni and N E Khoza, for the speedy arrest of suspect Thami Methula in relation to a series of rapes in and around the Daantjie area of the Kanyamazane police precinct.

A year ago President Thabo Mbeki outlined a Programme of Action that had as its focus in this second decade of freedom, the eradication of poverty and the creation of more jobs through interventions in the second economy and the acceleration of service delivery.

For government to meet these strategic objectives, there is a need for the Public Service to act outside the boundaries of the ordinary in serving the public in Mpumalanga.

Key among the issues public servants need to do is to accelerate the transformation of the public sector, not only in terms of race, gender or disability, but also regarding the manner in which services are delivered to the public.

Through the Batho Pele programme, government began an important process of changing focus and attitudes, to make public servants regard members of the public as key customers who deserve excellent, efficient and courteous service.

There are a number of easy yardsticks we could use in assessing whether we are indeed improving in delivering quality service to the people. One of these is by asking if at our police stations we treat the people with respect and courtesy.

We would know we have a transformed civil service if members of the public no longer feel humiliated or degraded when dealing with public servants, and when they look forward to visiting a government office instead of resenting this necessity.

Virtually all of the experience that citizens have with government is through service delivery institutions, be they hospitals, schools, social grants paypoints, police stations or home affairs service points.

Yet in many departments some of these service points are run-down, visibly dirty, have major shortages of staff, have shortages of equipment and vehicles, do not have proper signage and seating areas for citizens, have no rest areas for staff or struggle to provide clean reliable water.

In some instances these service points are not only poorly managed by their own managers, they are also unsupported by their district managers.

It is quite clear that as a public service we have not fully internalised the critical role that these service points play in the service delivery value chain. These service points are the “moment of truth” as far as citizens are concerned. Everything that happens at the Premier's office, departmental offices, is irrelevant as far as the citizen is concerned, unless it contributes to making their experience at the service point more pleasant.

Programme Director, a number of government departments and institutions have made major steps in setting norms and standards on the quality of services and products. However, many of the set standards and norms simply do not get adhered to by some public servants. There are also, however, instances where such norms and standards simply do not take into account what is possible and affordable at the coalface.

We are heartened by the progress that has been made so far in some service points in ensuring that we treat our people with respect. That is what brought us here tonight. Award presentation ceremonies are very important because they enable us to recognise the exceptional contributions made by some employees of the Public Service.

It is also true that honours and awards like these not only recognise individual excellence, and surely we do that tonight, but recognise the examples set by the people being honoured here in the value we attach to the activity of public service.

“Heroes in struggle and heroes in labour” – the story of Malaya Zamlaya (Little Land)

Let us remember that service delivery is a process and not an event. We must strive for continuous excellence. We must always be aware of the interests and needs of the people we serve and we must be open and flexible.

To achieve service excellence sometimes takes nothing more than a pleasant smile and recognising the importance of the service you provide and the inherent worth of every person you deal with.

Programme Director, the challenge we face is to strive for service standards that are in keeping with the strategic objectives of the departments. To this end the importance of performance management through clearly defined performance areas cannot be over-emphasised.

On behalf of the Government of Mpumalanga, I offer each of the men and women at the winning station my sincere congratulations. I urge you to continue to inspire other police stations around you through your example and your leadership. You are the pride of our public service.

**I thank you.**