

It is fantastic to be here in Mitchells Plain today!

It is an honour to be delivering my State of the Province Address in front of this community, and it is a special honour to be delivering it in this venue.

The Rocklands Civic Centre is no stranger to historic events. It was here that the United Democratic Front rose up against the evils of Apartheid. It was here that people of all walks united behind the idea of a democratic South Africa in which everyone would be free.

Over the years, thousands of people have entered through those doors- for community programs, important discussions, for weddings and celebrations. There is no better place than this place, a Provincial heritage site, for us to host this historic SOPA - the first SOPA outside of the Provincial Parliament, right here in one of our communities.

So, let's get down to the business of this house, which is for me to reflect on what we have delivered to date, and to lay out our delivery priorities for the future, to our audience here today, and across the province.

When I delivered my first SOPA in July last year, we vowed to "Get to Work". Over the past seven months, we have certainly done just that. Since being elected, I have visited dozens of communities, I have met with thousands of citizens, and we have received tens of thousands of mails, texts and calls telling us what you want and need.

We have heard you. You don't want smart cities and bullet trains. You want working cities and normal trains that get you to where you need to be, safely and on time. You want a government that focuses on getting the basics right, and actually delivers.

- You asked us to act against corruption because things like State Capture have sucked money away from service delivery and crippled our State Owned Enterprises.

We have delivered!

- In January, I instituted lifestyle audits for all members of my cabinet and they are being conducted as we speak. And while I expect that they will all come back clean, if they do not, I will take action.
- You called on us to stop spending on frills and fancy cars because you want your taxes to be spent on services for you.

We have delivered!

- Through a second review of the provincial ministerial handbook, we have created even further savings on top of the hundreds of millions we have already saved over the last 10 years.
- The residents of Grabouw told us that they needed longer clinic operating hours because they were having to travel to Caledon if there was an emergency at night.

We have delivered!

- The local clinic now operates 24/7, and what's more, its facilities are being upgraded!
- You told us your families are not safe because drugs, gangs and gender-based violence are tearing them apart.

Within less than four months of taking office, we have delivered!

- In September, we launched a comprehensive, province-wide Safety Plan aimed at halving the murder rate.

You asked for a government that is accessible because you are sick and tired of departments that push you from pillar to post.

In the Western Cape, where we govern, we have delivered!

- We now host Open Government First Thursdays, where every single resident of this province has access to the full Cabinet and senior government officials every month. Since our first event in August last year, we've held 1244 meetings with residents, and have resolved 80% of all the matters raised with us.
- You called on us to focus harder on cutting red tape because it's holding back your business.

We are delivering!

- In August last year, we launched a pilot Economic War Room which has brought City and Province officials and private sector players together on a weekly basis to address burning problems using a world-class methodology - and I have more to announce in that regard a bit later.
- You shared your dreams for the best possible education for your children, because you know that education is the surest path out of poverty.

We have delivered!

- Through the hard work of our education officials, teachers and learners across our province, the pass rates in our government schools went up! Spine Road High School - just 1 kilometre from here - achieved a 99% matric pass rate!
- You asked us to focus on jobs because you want a better life and a better future.

We have delivered!

- In the national government stats released last week, it was announced that the Western Cape created 24 000 new jobs for the quarter, more than half of the net jobs created in our country. We are South Africa's jobs province.

We did all this in just seven months - and because delivering services to you is our number one priority, and because we know there is more to do, we will not stop until the job is done.

In every meeting I attend, whether it be with you here in Mitchells Plain as I did this past Saturday, or with investors, diplomats, members of the national executive, the police or with the President of this country, I am fighting for you, the people of the Western Cape.

Now, in saying this, I also have to be frank with you. South Africa is in bad shape.

Last week we heard from the President that youth unemployment is at an all-time high.

Fewer jobs also means less tax money, which means budget cuts to health and education departments across the country.

We also know that our energy grid is beyond breaking point. The truth is, load shedding is most likely here to stay for the next **five years** if Eskom has any hope of completing the critical maintenance work it needs to do. We're facing the potential for stage four to six load shedding as we head into winter.

And we know that growing urban populations are radically increasing the demand for energy, as well as for affordable housing, safety solutions and service delivery.

As a government, we want to treat these challenges as opportunities - to change the way we do things, to innovate, and to push the boundaries of what is possible. But, Speaker we have also learnt that we don't have all the answers nor the capacity to do things alone.

That's why we have partnered with both local and national governments on critical projects - forsaking politics and agendas - to pool resources, to tap experience, to really deliver, to you, the citizen.

In fact, everything I do starts with you in mind, first. The Western Cape Safety Plan is a prime example of this.

SAFETY:

In every engagement I have had with residents and business owners across the province, crime and safety was raised as the number one concern.

I have heard you, and made this my number 1 priority. Our safety plan, which I spoke about earlier, is the biggest provincial safety plan delivered in this country, which focuses on increasing boots on the ground, and on reducing violence in our homes, in our schools, against women and children, between friends, on our streets.

In partnership with Mayor Dan Plato and the City of Cape Town, we have already deployed the first 500 of 3000 new law enforcement officers into our most crime-ridden communities.

A small number of these same officers were part of the procession you witnessed earlier, which demonstrated the tremendous might of all the men and women of this city and province who are keeping us safe every day - we thank you!

Now, I'd like to speak here about the South African Police Service. The fact is that, we don't have enough men and women in blue assigned to our province - the police's own stats prove this. That is why we have needed to bolster our own safety services. But, we are adamant that

our personnel will work in cooperation, hand in hand, with the national police in our province. This is a promise that I made to our new Provincial Commissioner, Lieutenant-General Yolisa Matakata when we met earlier this year, and it is a promise that I intend to keep. I am very pleased to welcome the PC here today - PC, you have the full support of me and my entire Cabinet in the execution of your important role. I would also like to thank Police Minister Bheki Cele for following through on his commitment to boost the number of police officers in this province- an additional 1100 new officers took up duty in the Western Cape at the start of this year!

In terms of violence prevention, every department of the Western Cape Government has been allocated a safety priority. These interventions are designed to ensure that our children grow up in healthy, loving and nurturing environments, cared for responsibly and not placed in situations in which they are exposed to harm; that schools are safe spaces for learning – learning the curriculum but also learning to interact with others -; that our neighbourhoods are places where people want to live and feel safe; that people have opportunities so that they do not even contemplate turning to a life of crime; so that men and boys can develop appropriate responses to anger, disappointment and rejection. In this way, over time, we will be able to build a society in which violence is not our first response.

Speaker, last year I attended the march to Parliament against Gender Based Violence. There, thousands of women told us that men, and the government of this country, are not doing enough to keep them safe. We heard women say that gender based violence only becomes a topic of conversation for 16 days of the year. And up until now, they have been right. We are standing up to this problem head on, every single day through the introduction of a 365 Days of Activism campaign against gender based violence. As part of the Safety Plan, for the first time in the history of this province, the Social Development Department has been tasked to design a performance indicator which will measure how they address gender based violence over our term in government. I am pleased that the department has already launched a dedicated email address to cater for gender based violence concerns, which is gbv365@westerncape.gov.za

Because violence is so complex, and because we want public funds to be spent on interventions that have the most impact in making people's lives safer, all our Safety Plan decisions will be informed by data and evidence, and will focus first on where crime is worst. We will not be afraid to adapt and change if our data and evidence shows we can do better.

To drive up accountability, I have established a special Safety Cabinet, which is meeting every 6 weeks to report back on what work has been done and what has been achieved. I am pleased to announce that the first Safety Cabinet was held yesterday, and was attended by, amongst others, the City, SAPS, Correctional Services and the Department of Justice. No provincial government has ever taken its role in reducing violence so seriously, and we are pleased to have strong partners around the table who share our mission.

I'd like to go into a bit of detail here, on just one of the priorities we are focusing on - radically boosting the Chrysalis Academy.

Chrysalis is a live-in leadership development programme aimed at empowering our most at-risk young people to become self-confident, economically-active role models within their communities.

It is worthy of more investment: In its 20-year history, it has played a role in transforming the lives of thousands of young adults - people like Joderick Veldtman who grew up in Hanover Park, a community which struggles daily against violence and gangs. As a youngster, Joderick had no clear direction, and without strong role models, or a sense of belonging, he says the temptation to join a gang was strong.

When the opportunity came along, he seized the chance to become part of the Chrysalis Academy 08 Delta group, where for three months, he learned to work in a team, he met people from all walks of life, and he developed skills that would set his life on a new path.

And what a path it has been! After Chrysalis, Joderick went to work at an organisation called Community Action towards a Safer Environment, known as CASE. This after-school programme teaches life skills and leadership to young people in the community. Joderick worked hard, and his dedication helped him to land a six-month youth volunteer exchange programme in Canada. He also received training at UWC on how to work with youth on drugs.

Joderick has now started his own NGO- using the skills he learned at Chrysalis and afterwards, to help young people in his community.

I think the impact that Chrysalis has on the lives of young people is best summed up in Joderick's own words when he says: "I am proud to say I am the role model I lacked as a young man growing up on the Cape Flats."

That is the power of Chrysalis- that it takes some of our most vulnerable young people and it gives them the tools they need to not only change themselves, but to positively influence the lives of others for years after they leave. And now, in addition to ramping it up, our Minister of Economic Opportunities has come on board to offer paid work placements for all its graduates.

Speaker, reducing violence is not the job of the government alone. There are some people in our community who are making an equally big impact in this space.

People like Masiphumelele-born Apish Tshetsha from Waves for Change, who is here with us today.

To date, Apish has helped over 1300 vulnerable children from unstable communities to break the cycle of violence in their lives through his award winning surf therapy programme focused on teaching kids to cope with stress, regulate their behaviour, build healing relationships, and make positive life choices.

He, and so many organisations like the one he leads, are our partners in delivering the behavioural change we need to make our province safer for everyone who lives in it.

ECONOMY:

Speaker, safety has an impact on everything we do in this province. It impacts our ability to grow the economy, and in a vicious cycle, when the economy is down and jobs are scarce, it creates fertile ground for violence to flourish.

But, we also know that the majority of people do not hunger after a life of crime. Our residents are hungry for opportunity.

And there can be so much more of it, in every community, town and region across our province, if we get our approach to economic growth right.

Our job must be to help the private sector create the jobs we need, - to be a partner and not an obstacle in addressing this important challenge. We have shown through many programmes that when we act in this way, we are successful in creating the opportunities that our citizens need to build a life they truly value.

I am particularly proud of the Premier's Advancement of Youth Internship Programme. It was established with one clear objective in mind: to help young unemployed people get the on-the-job training and experience they need to find a job in the private sector, and which in turn, helps the private sector expand, because it needs this experience to do so.

This year, we received 8644 applications and managed to offer a record 1118 places on this programme. To those who did not get in this round, I say DO NOT GIVE UP trying. Next year, I want this number to be even greater still, because every placement opens the door to opportunity. There are many more examples like this. From small business support, to investment facilitation; from Cape Town Air Access making it easier for tourists to visit our province, to our Export Advancement Programme that helps our local businesses sell their products across the world - our partnership model to growth is proving it can work.

But, Mr Speaker, this is not a time to rest on our laurels. The challenge is too big, and the risk to the livelihoods of many, many people, too serious. We need more action.

That is why we are determined to take our economic successes of the last 10 years to the next level, implementing even more priority actions to create the economic climate our residents need to succeed.

ENERGY AND RESILIENCE:

At the top of our list is finding alternatives to the number one hand brake on economic growth, and also a huge frustration for all of us - Eskom. Loadshedding makes me the most angry when I hear of its effect on our small businesses - businesses like the Mitchells Plain butchery of Nawaaz Sablay, who supplies quality halal meat across our peninsula and beyond, and has had to take huge strides to work around these outages.

When stage 6 hit us on the 9th of December it was a harsh awakening, and we have to be brave enough to admit to ourselves that we aren't in for a quick fix.

For several years, we have been calling on the national government to make a number of the energy reforms which the President eventually announced in SONA last week. These are welcomed. As a first step, National needs to clarify the timelines and processes for making the opportunities they have announced a reality – they need to move from talk to action as quickly as possible.

That said, I still have a few questions in my mind: will municipalities be able to sell the power they procure from Independent Power Producers back onto the grid? If not, then any power produced will be for their own use, solving just a small part of the problem.

The Western Cape has worked hard in recent years to develop the framework to support alternative energy: 23 of our municipalities support Small Scale Embedded Energy, we have promoted the uptake of solar PV, and we have done a large part of the groundwork required for the importation of Liquefied Natural Gas. As a province, we are primed to take advantage of the excellent economic opportunities that green- and alternative energy present for investment and growth.

There is also an unparalleled opportunity for South Africa in the global energy transition. We are fortunate, especially in the Western Cape, to have some of the best solar and wind resources in the world, and we have the ability to become the emerging market leader in renewable energy.

My commitment to the people of the Western Cape is that we will work hard and fast to make maximum use of the opportunities that the President's announcements provide, so that we can see a more positive energy future in the Province as soon as possible.

This is our 4-point plan to date:

1. We will help municipalities to procure energy from IPPs. Procurement in the government space is complicated and time consuming, so we will ensure that there is dedicated support to speed up a more robust procurement process.
2. We will increase Small Scale Embedded Generation like Solar PV across our province. The Energy Security Game Changer achieved a lot in this space, but more can still be done. Decreased reliance on the national grid is a key component of a more stable energy future.
3. We will increase the greening of government buildings across the Western Cape. Where there is a government rooftop that can benefit from solar, it will be installed. We already have solar systems on 17 provincial buildings, including our Agriculture Head Office and the Cape Teaching and Learning Institute. We have another 9 projects on-the-go. Municipalities across the province are being supported and encouraged to make similar investments.
4. We will fast track efforts to import Liquefied Natural Gas through Saldanha Bay, and enable Eskom's Ankerlig plant to operate on LNG rather than the much more expensive diesel. Our work has already de-risked these initiatives, and we call on the national government to move with speed to bring LNG to our industries and power plants in the Province. Gas to power may also make sense in Mossel Bay. Total is already exploring offshore gas there, and while the outcome is several years away, we are starting the work now to make sure that we are able to maximise the major economic advantages which gas provides.

The wind and solar resources in South Africa are so plentiful that using only 1% of our land, renewable energy could produce over 6 times the amount of energy that Eskom produces today.

DEDAT, with the assistance of Wesgro and GreenCape, are already focusing their efforts on turning this challenging time for our province and country into opportunities by growing the

Green Economy. And I am incredibly excited that the newly established Special Economic Zone for Green Technology - right here in Atlantis, Cape Town - will help attract the investment we need to make this happen.

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS:

Speaker, it is our responsibility to create an environment that is conducive for growth and jobs: an economy where small businesses are employing more and more people from their communities because they can't keep up with demand; where these same small businesses grow with the right support to be exporters, taking our products all over the world; an economy where global investors are landing in their numbers at Cape Town International, sharing their stories with the world at just how easy it is to do business in our province.

Whilst our quest to remove red tape has already yielded results, we have more to do!

Since the Red Tape Unit opened its doors in 2011, we have logged 9183 cases, with an 87% resolution rate, despite many of the issues not falling within our constitutional mandate.

To give but one example, this small team was recently approached by a company unable to unblock a R5 billion renewable energy project in the Tankwa Karoo that was held up by heritage authorisation, in a time when we drastically need to take pressure off the national grid. Raybin Windvogel and his team were ultimately able to resolve the issue and keep the project on track, helping an investment to go ahead which is critical to building our energy resilience, addressing climate change, and creating green jobs.

I would like to thank these officials for their efforts and dedication, especially in dealing with some of the difficult customers who knock at their door for problems generated by other spheres of government. Also, these kinds of problems often don't keep office hours, and despite this, our officials try their best to assist. Day and Night.

Based on the Red Tape Team's impact to date, we will be dramatically scaling it up, so that it is able to do more for you.

We also committed to working with municipalities who want to establish their own Red Tape Reduction Units. A new dedicated Municipal Economic Support Unit housed within the Department of Economic Development will help to ensure these units are launched.

The InvestSA One Stop Shop - operated by DEDAT and Wesgro - will also continue to be supported by our government because it makes it easier for businesses from around the world, to invest and create jobs in our province.

Then, there are a couple of systemic blockages in our economy that are hurting a large number of businesses, big and small, and need to be addressed with urgency. That is where our War Room comes in.

I am pleased to announce that we have had a very successful pilot phase.

Over a period of just 100 days, a team of 43 members undertook 355 stakeholder engagements with the private sector and other key sector players to address burning impediments to growth. The results of this effort in such a short period of time were

remarkable. From something as simple as introducing timed agendas to the Heritage Western Cape committee meetings so that applicants no longer have to wait around with their professional teams at huge expense, to securing the funds for extra staff to meet their increased case load, the impact of this work has been felt.

These first results have provided more than enough impetus to embed and upscale the War Room for the full term of this office. To begin with, we will continue to focus on unblocking issues in the construction and property development sector, as well as on minimising traffic congestion. We will also be looking specifically at ways to increase the conviction rate in our criminal justice system. It is imperative that criminals know there will be consequences for their actions!

Outside of the War Room, but of equal importance, is our drive to bring all the necessary players together to form a task team focused on unblocking congestion at our port. Because this has such a direct negative impact on our export competitiveness, we are working full steam ahead to find solutions to fix it.

And because this government is led by evidence, we will measure whether we are having a positive impact through a new and transparent Ease of Doing Business Index. This index will be a mechanism to hold ourselves, local municipalities as well as national government departments and institutions in the province accountable to our promise of creating an enabling environment for you and your business. It will be published for the first time in the new financial year.

Finally, we have an offer to make to President Ramaphosa. In his State of the Nation address last week, the President told South Africa that he is top slicing the national budget by around R20 billion for programmes to support youth unemployment. Well, we have a number of proven, job creating programmes for the President to put more money into, and I'm going to be inviting him on a tour to see some of them first hand.

On the itinerary will definitely be our Youth Cafes, one of which is just down the road in Eastridge. At these centres, young people without a job can access personal development training, career advice, and creative spaces where they are able to express themselves. I'd also like to introduce the President to some of our fully-funded bursary learners studying agriculture at Elsenburg. These ambitious and bright students hold the future of our food security in their hands. And if I have to choose just one more of the many programmes we support, because there is only so much time in a day, I'll take him to the Elsie's River I-CAN centre, where he'll be able to meet 'Lwazi' the traffic robot, who was created by one of the centre's many students. In fact, Lwazi is here today.

Due to the huge impact of our various tech and BPO upskilling programmes, we're opening up a further 1000 spots in the coming year for interns from our communities, all of whom will be paid a working stipend while they receive training.

Through the further bolstering of these already successful initiatives by the Presidency, we would see more of our youth get their kick-start into the economy - which is all they need.

HEALTH:

I have no doubt that the excitement of our young people to work is only eclipsed by the excitement of their parents to see them secure their first start in life.

I am a father myself: I know what it means to want the very best for your child, and to work hard in order to provide it for them. This starts on the very first day that they are born.

That is why I am very pleased to announce that we will be ramping up our First 1000 Days programme. It is the first 1000 days, from conception until the age of 2, that form the foundation of a child's future. In the Western Cape, moms-to-be receive medical screenings for potential health risks, as well as support to provide their babies with adequate nutrition, loving care and opportunities for early learning. These added services ensure a healthier start to life for our little people, helping them to thrive and prosper as they grow up.

As we play a stronger role in delivering better healthcare to you, we also ask that you play a stronger role in caring for yourself and your family. The Western Cape already has the highest life expectancy in the country, and the country's best health system... facts that we are proud of and extremely motivated to build on, in partnership with you.

Now, many of you expressed to me that you are concerned about what the National Health Insurance Bill will mean for you and your family. You are fearful that the level of care you currently receive will deteriorate.

Speaker, the Western Cape Health Department manages 19 million patient visits per year. This is a department which oversees over a million emergency centre visits and 160 000 theatre operations annually.

This year, this pioneering department made up of world class doctors, has performed a double lung transplant on a patient at Groote Schuur Hospital, and a toe-to-hand transfer on a child at Red Cross Children's Hospital.

They have introduced cutting edge technology which allows for patient data to be accessible from any Western Cape Government health site. This technology also allows our staff to determine when patients have defaulted on their treatment, and take steps to get them back on track.

Ours is a healthcare system that works. Introducing the proposed NHI will have a significant impact on our ability to continue to deliver that level of care and ultimately will impact you, as the patient, and your loved ones. It will also end private healthcare in its current form, potentially mothballing hospitals like the new Melomed that was recently opened in this community.

This is why we do not support the unworkable, unfundable NHI Bill.

What we would like to see from the national government instead, is a commitment to strengthen and fully fund our current systems, in not only health, but also education.

EDUCATION:

As a province, we are proud of our successes in education, and there are many:

- We have seen improvements across the board in maths and language skills tests in Grades 3, 6 and 9 since 2009.
- Our matric pass rate for 2019 improved to 82.3%. The pass rates showed significant improvement in schools in quintiles one to three.
- Our retention rate between Grades 10 and 12 also improved. This means that more of our children are staying in school and completing their basic education.
- Our bachelor's pass rate is the highest ever for this province, meaning more of our children are on the path to pursuing further learning opportunities.

But this means nothing to you if your child has not yet been assigned a place in school for this year.

Our education system is facing immense strain due to in-migration from other provinces. Despite this, the national government has cut education department budgets, impacting our ability to build schools and hire teachers - a situation we call on to be reversed.

Since last year's SOPA, we have opened three new schools- Botha's Halte Primary School, Delft High and Disa Road Primary school. Two replacement schools, Crestway and Philippi, have also been opened.

- Since July last year, our Department of Transport and Public Works has started work on 76 new Grade R and Expansion Classrooms at 22 schools, accommodating approximately 2800 learners.
- We have delivered 197 mobile classrooms to accommodate 6895 learners. We have commenced design work for two new or replacement schools and we have begun construction on five more.
- And because we share your desire for your children to be able to learn and play free from fear, we will build 30 security fences at schools in high-risk locations each year, for the next five years.

Going forward, the Department of Transport and Public Works will be looking to work with contractors using alternative building technologies which are faster and greener, and which will allow us to replace mobile classrooms with permanent buildings.

We are also looking at working with private partners to help take some of the strain off the education system, either through the provision of affordable private education-, collaboration schools or donor funded schools. I am excited by new ventures I see in the education space, such as the online high school recently launched by the same South African brothers who pioneered the global online learning platform Getsmarter, Rob and Sam Paddock.

To further improve the quality of education for our learners, we have moved ahead, despite opposition, to appoint a Chief Evaluator for the School Evaluation Authority. This body has now begun its work, shining a light on the quality of education provided at our schools to promote further improvement.

I am also thrilled to announce that in anticipation of the employment of the Western Cape's very own Children's Commissioner, we have made provision to fully set up this office. I am very excited that the young people of our province will very soon have a dedicated champion to protect and promote their rights.

TRANSPORT:

Speaker, during my election campaign, I saw first-hand how employees, entrepreneurs and learners struggle to get around on board the defunct national PRASA rail system. It is no wonder that metrorail has come to be known as metrofail. In the past few years, the decline of our train system has picked up pace, with increased arson attacks stripping the service down to its bare bones.

This province has put up its hand and offered to take on the management of the rail system because we know we can do a better job, for you.

Despite the national government's repeated rejection of our requests, we have committed ourselves to getting the central line working by any means possible. We know that its degradation has had a massive impact on communities just like this one. We have had meetings with the City of Cape Town to explore potential ways forward, but the bottom line is: we need the buy-in of the national government. Over the past few weeks, we have had several very positive engagements with the administrator appointed by PRASA. I'm also thrilled that President Ramaphosa has finally committed to doing something about the worst affected lines. On this particular promise, I am very eager to see action.

Just last week, our transport minister and his national counterpart signed the Go-George deal having worked hard, and together, to unblock some of the issues delaying it. We call for the same spirit of cooperation to address the failures of metrorail.

In the meantime, the Western Cape Government, in conjunction with the City, is already proceeding with a full feasibility study on moving rail away from national government control. We still believe rail should lie with us because we have the capacity and determination to get it right for the citizens of this province.

As the quality and the reliability of our train service continues to spiral downwards, minibus taxis have become the most widely used form of public transport in the Western Cape. The taxi industry is a double edged sword, - on the one hand, it is a vital asset to our people and economy, but on the other, we know that some taxis aren't safe.

In order to ensure that this service is safe across the board, we intend to introduce a game-changing minibus pilot project which will use technology to monitor and improve the behaviour of taxis drivers. We will also be investing more in public transport infrastructure, including ranks, stops and shelters to improve the daily experience of taxi commuters.

We're also clamping down on other errant road users. Through our ramped up visibility and enforcement operations - which saw 21 017 car checks, 2081 roadblocks, 1074 drunk driving operations, and 1007 speed operations,- fatalities over the December/January period were driven down by 23%. Zero fatalities were recorded for public transport vehicles.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend those motorists and public transport operators who obeyed the laws of our road, and who considered their safety, the safety of their passengers and the safety of other road users every time they got behind the wheel. Together, we have managed to make huge strides in the right direction.

We have also heard you when you've told us that sitting in traffic is affecting your ability to access opportunities, and in some cases, even impacting your job security. That is why, as mentioned, one of our three war room teams is interrogating our congestion pinch points, and I hope to receive their feedback on implementable solutions in the near term. We will make these a budget priority.

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Of course, we already know that if people live closer to their place of work, traffic will decrease. That's why we are committed to delivering solutions which will create affordable housing opportunities in proximity to our economic centres.

Speaker, on my very first day in this office, I accepted a memorandum from a group of protestors demanding services on a piece of illegally occupied, private land. This complex situation, and many other equally complex situations involving housing, land and illegal occupations continue to play themselves out in our province, and indeed across our country.

These invaders are making the government's job of delivering housing opportunities to those most deserving, and of addressing past spatial biases in home ownership, completely impossible.

Both the Woodstock Hospital and Helen Bowden mixed housing project sites are overrun by illegal occupants - many of whom were encouraged to take their criminal action by registered NGOs purporting to stand for land redistribution. How ironic then that these very organisations are driving the exact opposite outcome. The longer these sites are illegally occupied, and the more costly delays we suffer, the less we'll be able to deliver. To these occupiers I say - vacate these premises so that we can build homes for those who have waited patiently for decades to receive much deserved redress. Some might ask - why do we simply not force them out? Well, these occupiers and the organisations which support them are abusing the well-meaning laws of our country to suit their ends. The PIE Act, which was originally enacted in 1998 to prevent unfair evictions, is being used as a weapon by illegal invaders to force the government into providing them with emergency housing, effectively allowing them to jump the housing queue. Simply put, these invaders are holding the government and longstanding housing queue beneficiaries to ransom.

These are sadly not the only cases in which we are caught up in lengthy court processes.

Speaker, when I became Premier I committed to doing everything I could to resolve the issues around the Tafelberg land sale. That matter has gone to court for arguing, and the court urged the parties to try and settle the matter through engagement. This government is more than happy to engage with the affected parties toward a resolution, but it is going to require a process of give and take to find a solution in the best interests of the people of this province.

Our Human Settlements department is working hard to simplify and strengthen our housing database, and at the same time, deliver homes to those who need them most.

To make sure this happens, we have expanded the housing opportunity priority group to include backyard dwellers. This means that every time we launch a greenfield project, backyarders will also be prioritized. Already, we are seeing this in action. In Bredasdorp,

more than 60% of the qualifying beneficiaries for the 158 housing opportunities currently being created there, are backyarders.

The Minister of Human Settlements has also embarked on a province-wide drive to update our housing demand database. In October and November, more than 8500 people across the province attended his sessions. The metro drive will start this weekend. I urge all residents interested in housing opportunities to participate. I'm also pleased that very soon you'll be able to check and update your profile, as well as view your application status, via an online app which we are currently testing.

Between June and December 2019, we handed over 1144 title deeds to beneficiaries in our province, and we have many more opportunities on the way!

- Contractors are currently on site at the Conradie Park Development, through which we will deliver 3605 housing opportunities in phase one, with almost half of these earmarked for affordable housing. The sod-turning for these homes- which will be close to major transit routes, commercial-, recreational- and education facilities - happened just last week.
- The Founders Garden Artscape precinct project received cabinet approval in April 2019, and will be developed using the same Better Living Model being employed at Conradie Park. Ultimately it will create a mixed- use development in the city, incorporating social, gap and market accommodation. We are currently in a process aimed at amending the land use conditions of the site. We hope that construction will kick off by the end of 2022.
- In Woodstock, at the Pine Road site, we are building 243 social housing units, with construction commencing later this year.
- In the Belhar CBD, we are currently constructing 4188 assorted residential units, including student accommodation. So far, 629 social housing units and 120 military veterans units have been completed. A further 600 low income rental units, and 1000 FLISP units are being built as we speak. Construction on the student housing portion will begin later this year.
- And because of our focus on safety, Minister Simmers is bringing new design and layout features into our projects. In Vlakkeland and Dal Josefats, we are already incorporating 'stoeps' to new homes, because in the past, the grannies who sat on their front stoeps were the eyes and ears of their communities. We are also working on safety lighting, and creating more open communal areas in our developments, so people can get to know their neighbours.

Our search for more suitable housing development land continues. My promise to match any land made available for housing by National Public Works Minister, Patricia de Lille, still stands. I'd like to make another offer - allow the government of this region to take over the delivery of District 6, so that we can hand it back to its rightful owners - we will do it quicker and better.

Speaker, in this time of need for our residents, the entire Western Cape Government must be bolder, and do its very best to do things differently to find new solutions.

CULTURE CHANGE AND INNOVATION:

One of the things I am most passionate about is promoting culture change in the Western Cape Public Service.

I want to take a moment now to tell you about Mr David Arendorf- the winner of the Western Cape's Batho Pele award for service excellence. David is a general assistant at the Symphony Way Community Day Centre, doing general cleaning work such as mopping, removing waste bins and keeping entrances tidy. Over time, he has taken on many more additional tasks. He checks oxygen tanks and replaces the empty ones, he tests the generators each week. He does handyman work and has even volunteered to be trained to maintain the borehole.

Mr Arendorf epitomises going the extra mile. Last year, he was able to save the facility R1.7 million in municipal fees by conscientiously checking the water meter reading against the actual bill, and discovered we were being overcharged. Thanks to his efforts, we received a credit for the excess payments made.

This is the kind of ethic I want to see across our organisation- people who take pride in their work, no matter what it is; people who are eager to help, even if it's hard to do so; people who recognize that taking even one small extra step, can have a major impact on someone else's life; people who want to turn this country around, one kind and helpful act at a time.

On the other hand, I can really understand why people get angry with the treatment they receive from authorities. I was horrified in December when I received a call to say that one of South Africa's most prominent international young cycling stars, Nic Dlamini, had his arm broken in an altercation with national SANPARKS staff, bringing his career trajectory to a crashing halt. No person is deserving of treatment like that.

The bottom line is that even though this was not a Western Cape staff member, we want our staff to lead the way when it comes to serving you.

That is why, led by the Director General of the province, we'll be taking our staff on a culture journey, embedding a set of values that we can all stand by. It's an attitude that starts with us as political leaders, and the way that we interact with each other.

Last year, I spoke of building a relationship between the government and the official opposition that is constructive and respectful. I've had several opportunities to meet with the Honorable Dugmore, and while some of those meetings have been robust, and we sometimes disagree, I hope to continue our conversations because together we can help our people prosper, better than we can apart. Today, I reiterate that my door is open for members of opposition parties to meet with me to discuss their concerns and issues. Cheap political point scoring is clearly designed just to benefit politicians and is not in the best interests of the public that we serve.

Speaker, I have carried this same spirit in building my relationships with the national leadership, with the other provinces and with municipalities. Our Director General has had excellent engagements with the leadership of Gauteng- finding a lot of common ground and shared experiences. Last year, I also had a positive meeting with the Premier of the Northern Cape. He and some of his MECs visited us to learn about how we've digitised our medical records. This process has helped us tremendously in improving our service to patients, and we were very pleased to pass our knowledge on.

Similarly, Minister Bheki Cele has called on other provinces to implement our highly effective Court Watching Briefs program as an oversight tool to track the progress of criminal cases through the justice system. We have had working visits from the Civilian Secretariat for Police Service and from representatives of the Eastern Cape's Department of Community Safety with whom we have shared our learnings.

When you deal with the Western Cape Government, you must feel like you are our top priority.

And because you are our top priority, I remain steadfast in my commitment to ensure that service delivery is not held up in the name of audit compliance. Our goal is to govern with integrity, putting efficient and innovative processes in place to ease the regulatory burden on our staff. Through this recipe, the Western Cape was once again the best performer in the latest Auditor General findings. I am pleased that 26 out of 30 municipalities in the province also received unqualified audits.

But, as we know, good audit outcomes are not enough. One of our functions as a provincial government is to support and strengthen our municipalities to manage their own affairs. When it comes to those that don't, especially as it relates to environmental issues such as water quality, we will have no choice but to take action. We recognise that rapid urbanisation and factors such as load shedding can impact our infrastructure, but municipalities must put risk plans in place to deal with these eventualities.

We are also bolstering our forensic investigation unit which looks into municipal matters, to strengthen accountability at this level of government and root out any potential risk for corruption.

Speaker, every day I come to work and I am faced with a number of complex issues that require me, and the government that I lead, to make tough choices and respond.

Some days are easier than others, like the days when I get to join residents like those in the audience today at their first ever Mitchells Plain book fair, led by the formidable Athol Williams, or when I walk into the fashion studio of Suraya, entrepreneur extraordinaire and a source of deep inspiration for me, or when I get to spend time with locals from a diverse range of backgrounds at the Mitchells Plain Festival, pioneered by Mr Rozario Brown.

I am so pleased to have had these Mitchells Plain ambassadors, and all our other community members and leaders, here today.

Over the past year, we have made enormous strides in addressing some of the challenges we as South Africans, and as residents of the Western Cape, face. I am proud of what we have achieved.

But that must not be enough.

We will not slow down until you as the residents of this province see and feel the progress of our delivery first hand – our success is your success, and your success is ours. Our job together is to build a better South Africa. We dare not fail, as our future depends on it.

And for me, success looks like this:

- We are safe
- We have personal opportunities to prosper
- Our economy is back on track and growing
- We are healthy
- Our education opens doors for us
- We can move about easily
- We have homes that we are proud of
- And we have a government that we trust and believe in

Most of all, we have hope for our future.

We will continue to work hard, every day, to deliver this vision a reality, for you.

Speaker, as a final word, I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to all of the people who have been involved in putting this historic event together. Hosting the Opening of Parliament and SOPA here in Mitchells Plain, was no easy task and it took many, many pairs of hands to make it happen. I would also like to extend a special thank you to the people of Mitchells Plain for welcoming us here today. It has been an absolute pleasure to deliver the 2020 State of the Province Address direct to you.