

**STATEMENT FOR MEDIA BRIEFING ON HOUSING BUDGET
VOTE - 27 MAY 2008**

A gloomy spectre hangs over our horizon; the acrid smell of burning flesh will forever haunt all of us all. A deep sadness has 'numbed our senses' as we navigate our way through the unfortunate and harrowing incidents of the past fortnight. It is a deathly cold wintry wind that blows through our country.

Last week, the Housing MECs and myself held a meeting to examine the incidents and we are quite certain that our policies are sound. We do not however want to pre-empt the outcome of the government investigation underway. We stand committed to do whatever is necessary as the outcomes might determine. What we wanted to express in the strongest terms however is our deepest sadness that our people should do what they have done. Whatever the reason, there can be no justification for the taking of life. This has traumatised us all, the foreign nationals, the South African community and, I am certain, the perpetrators themselves. We would like to give our sincerest expression of regret to the families of the affected and bereaved.'

We take this opportunity once again to assure our communities that this government cares very deeply for them. We work tirelessly to ensure that this message gets through to them: there is nothing we haven't done to ensure that **EVERY PENNY APPROPRIATED** for housing is spent on the provision of houses. We have stepped up our delivery and are delivering better quality units, because we are committed to the promises we have made. If we have not delivered as fast as some would have wanted it is because we simply do not have the money to do that. The problem of housing is enormous we

understood it as we took over government, we understood it as we crafted the constitution which is why we were deliberate in our use of words such as **progressive realisation, within available resources of access to housing.** We count on our people to judge us by what we have achieved so far, and despite all else we will ensure the "survival of hope".

It has been pointed out by some that we are actually victims of our own success, as we speed up delivery there is agitation in each that their turn should come.

Here I would like to quote from a Sunday Times article of the 18th May by Rowan Philp, an article I might not agree in its entirety, but one whose clarity I find very persuasive:

"The Democratic Alliance is wrong in its claims that the xenophobic violence seen Alexandra, Diepsloot and elsewhere this week was triggered by an absence of service delivery. For 14 years, South Africans have shown a Job-like tolerance for lack of delivery. Instead, it is precisely when delivery does happen – and happen visibly – that perceptions of injustice translate to violence.

In the Western Cape, it was only after the N2 Gateway housing project began physical construction that major clashes broke out between poor coloured communities and Xhosa migrants from the Eastern Cape. Even longtime Xhosa residents of settlements such as Joe Slovo attacked the domestic migrants as "outsiders", believing them to have jumped the housing waiting lists.

And it was only after service delivery was fast-tracked in Khayelitsha that neighbouring informal settlers began to seal off streets with burning barricades.

The Alexandra renewal project is both a staggering failure and a remarkable success. Launched in 2001 the project has accelerated dramatically in the past two years, with the erection of new schools, police stations and almost-completed residential units, with a new focus which emphasises construction over "soft projects" – specifically so residents would be able to see the fruits of the grand plan. The plan worked too well.

Although this captures the trigger, it does not cover the entire spectrum of what has so dehumanised us. We are working on all those matters that have caused concern.

I appeal to all who qualify and wait for houses, despite all the problems we face, we are on course, within the limited resources at our disposal. I want to assure them, their turn will come. This is our investment in our economy, in our communities. Failing you would mean failing the Freedom Charter, failing ourselves, we could not do that. We have come too far to allow that, we have provided 2.6million houses why would we falter now...?