

Press briefing session by KZN Health MEC, Neliswa Nkonyeni on the occasion of the launch of a Multi-million Rand Hospital Catering empowerment project.

21 November 2006

In the true spirit of the Age of Hope, today we are unveiling one of our most ambitious empowerment exercises ever as a Department of Health.

The KZN Department of Health is the biggest buyer with more than R3.8 billion spent on procurement alone, which includes buying items like curtains, sheets, gowns and other services like cleaning and minor renovations. This type of market was inaccessible to people in our community but this has since changed, as in May last year, the department established a new unit known as the Targeted Enterprises Development Unit.

It is through this unit that we have decided to ensure that **R 228 million** budgeted for catering services for the next coming three years, be shared with new KZN role players. We consider this cake too big not to be shared if we truly take a cue from the tenets of our Freedom Charter.

It will come as a surprise to many that only Eight [8] conglomerates are providing catering services to a total Forty-seven [47] of our hospitals. These eight, having been contracted pre the amalgamation of the ex KwaZulu and ex NPA health administrations. Fortunately all the contracts have now expired and are being run on month-to-month basis. The Department is thus free to go the empowerment route as the current practice is undoubtedly stagnating transformation.

We are very much confident in the wealth of experience and zeal among our people that given a chance they can stand-up to the task of providing catering services in our institutions--- judging by the large sumptuous meals decked out in various gatherings like weddings and funerals.

Bids have been canvassed and the Tenders close at the end of this month. So far, we are still happy with the whole process having concluded the Tender briefing exercise as scheduled to all our eleven Health Districts between the 6th and 11th of this month.

The adjudication process is to be duly finalised during the second week of December and the awarding of contracts

to happen early next year. I must point out that by taking this initiative, the Department seeks to achieve the following:

- Advance the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment
- Improve the aesthetics of hospital meals, and
- Ensure Food Safety

I must point out that as a Department of Health we expect the prospective caterers to abide by all State policies, standards and procedures related to catering services including:

- Nutrition and dietary policy and standards,
- Clinical guidelines on management and control of infectious food borne diseases in SA,
- Health and Safety Act,
- Hygiene Regulations R918 as published in the Government Gazette.
- Infection Prevention and Control Guidelines, and
- Any other quality initiative as prescribed by the Department of Health.

We have also prescribed that vegetables, meat and poultry be procured from local communities, i.e. Co-ops, emerging small farmers and targeted enterprises. In this regard the Department reserves a right to request the Contractor to submit proof of purchase from targeted groups particularly the Co-ops which all KwaZulu Natal Government departments are initiating and supporting. We want to remain true to our election promises of fighting poverty and creating jobs.

We are mindful of the pitfalls ahead but we take a cue from Mao Tse Tung's reasoning that *a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step*.

I thank you.