

**Speech by KZN Health MEC Neliswa Nkonyeni upon the Re-Launch of  
the KwaZulu-Natal Nursing College**

**24 July 2007**

The Honourable Premier: Dr Sbu Ndebele;

Honourable members of the Provincial Health Portfolio Committee

Respected Mayors of Msunduzi and uMgungundlovu Municipalities;

Principal of KwaZulu-Natal Nursing College: Dr Nkonzo Mthembu

KwaZulu-Natal College of Nursing Council Members;

Health District Officials;

Members of the South African Nursing Council;

Representatives from Universities- UKZN, Unizulu, UNISA & DUT;

Ex College Council Members;

Retired Nurse Educators & Principals;

Representatives of the Organised Labour;

Representatives of the Private Nursing Schools;

Respected guests and Friends

Welcome and warm greetings to all of you who have come to celebrate with us on yet another milestone development for both our Department as well as our people especially the sick.

We know that in terms of the latest estimated figures, KwaZulu–Natal has a population of about 10 million people, a majority of which are uninsured and solely depend and rely on the public health facilities for their ailments; afflictions and sanity.

To shoulder this responsibility, the KwaZulu–Natal Department of Health employs a workforce of 54 000, out of which more than 23 000 are nurses. On their own these statistics show that Nurses are the backbone of service delivery for KwaZulu–Natal Department of Health.

It is in this light that we must view and understand the enormous responsibility and the resulting accomplishments of the Principal of the KwaZulu Natal Nursing College, Dr Lulu Nkonzo Mthembu.

*MALIBONGWE!*

We are also very appreciative of the dedication of the 3 Deputy Principals as well to all the tutors and staff members of the College.

Today we are here to say thank you to all of them for having successfully restructured; transformed and merged all the 3 Nursing Colleges into one KwaZulu–Natal College of Nursing with eleven (11) campuses and fourteen (14) sub–campuses under its management. Thank you very much indeed.

Our assembly here today must thus be understood as a means to inform the public about the presence of this historic New College in

our province. This event must also be understood as a means to let our people know what this College stands for and what it is striving to achieve.

I must for the sake of clarity, give a brief background as to where we come from in as far as nurse training in this province is concern.

Initially, each college had its own curriculum and each was affiliated to a different University and therefore there was no uniformity in the province.

Today we are now operating under a single uniform curriculum that has been approved by the South African Nursing Council, a feat on its own.

This transformation also enables us now to monitor, co-ordinate and control the Nursing Education Standards in our province from a single management perspective.

As expected of an institution of higher learning, the KwaZulu–Natal College of Nursing, for its intellectual life, is affiliated to the two (2) residential Universities namely:

- University of KwaZulu–Natal, and the
- University of Zululand

This relationship has resulted into an agreement entered into between KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health and these two Universities leading to the establishment of key three governance structures namely:

- College Council
- Senate, as well as,
- Campus Boards

Ladies and gentlemen, the fruits of this unification process have already been tasted with the colourful single graduation ceremony in two venues in September and October last year, wherein 2900 students were graduated. The hallmark of this being that it places us on a leading pedestal when it comes to producing the most number of nurses in the country.

We are also certain that if we continue producing nurses in this mode we will eventually see a remarkable improvement in the Maternal, Child and Women's health. We are also bound to make a dent to the diseases that continue ravaging our communities especially Tuberculosis as well as HIV and AIDS.

Ladies and gentlemen, as one of our obligations in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly that of halving poverty by 2015, we are opening up nursing as an employment and career opportunity.

As a Department, for 2006 / 2007 financial year we have allocated R270 million solely to be used for nurse training. We also have approximately 200 Primary Health Care nurses trained annually at the tertiary institutions including the provincial campuses, all these being fully supported by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health financially.

We are thus calling on all our students to work just a little harder in order to be considered and enrolled. They must know that **requirements for a two-year training course that leads to a qualification as a Staff Nurse are as follows:**

- Grade 12 with English at least at symbol E on Higher Grade and total points to be at 15 and above.

Those leading to a **qualification as a Professional Nurse, a four-year training course, are as follows:**

- Grade 12 with English and Biology and a total of 20 points and above.

We are encouraging aspiring nurses to regularly check the advertisements in the newspapers as the intake is done in July and January for the Professional Nursing discipline as well as in July and November for the two-year Staff Nursing discipline.

The attainment of the above mentioned qualifications is not an end to itself since Nursing has now positioned itself as more of a career than a calling.

Our nurses are pushed and incentivised to upgrade themselves and make use of the variety of career paths at hand. One area in which we already see results is in the **dispensing license training** that is given to the Primary Health Care professional nurses which we commenced in 2005 as per the requirements of the Medicines and Substances Control Act. We are proud to say, since then, we now have **1600** professional nurses that have been trained and are now able to practice independently. They can today assess, treat, diagnose and care for the clients accessing the Primary Health Care facilities.

We also hope that the recent announcement by our national Minister, Dr Manto Tshabalala Msimang about the 23% increase in nurses' salaries is a testimony that we are doing everything in our power to improve their package. Provincial departments are also playing their part in terms of improving nurse's working conditions. The **phlebotomists** we are employing and deploying to our hospitals are there to ease the burden on the nurses' shoulders so that they can concentrate on what they have been trained to do.

Plans are also afoot at the national level to bring back into the country the nurses who are currently plying their services abroad. More emphasis is put on the return and production of Nursing Tutors, as this is where we experience shortage as is evident in our rural institutions such as the Benedictine Hospital Campus.

We again thank the hard work staff of the KwaZulu Natal Nursing College for putting us at the level where we can start seeing hope for the millions of our citizens. We are saying they must continue producing nurses who adhere to the Pledge of Service that we received in 2005 in which they said:

*We solemnly pledge ourselves to the service of humanity and will endeavour to practice our profession with conscience and with dignity.*

As a department we will continue supporting our nurses to realize the stipulation of this pledge as that will without doubt result in the decrease of the high number of litigation cases that we are faced with as a result of negligence by our personnel in dealing with the patients.

We ask you to continue working with us for the realisation of the undertaking that we made; to give quality health care to all the citizens of this beautiful province.

Lastly, continue making us proud by sweeping the stakes in all the Awards that are handed over in recognition of good nursing practices.

Here I refer to the:

- Cecelia Makiwane Award, an Annual Health Award, open to all categories of nurses.
- Maralyn Lehana award, which is co-coordinated by DENOSA and open to all nurses as well. We are proud of the fact that last year our the 2<sup>nd</sup> place went to a nurse from KZN which highlights the

commitment and competence that exists within the nursing profession in this province.

Remember the Nurse's Pledge says:

*'The total health of our patients will be our first consideration'*

I thank you.