

**Speech by KZN Health MEC, Ms Neliswa Nkonyeni
on the occasion of the celebration of the Workers Day
in King Edward Hospital**

03 May 07

Programme Director
Hospital Board Members
Hospital Management
Friends of the Hospital
Abefundisi abazosiqinisa
All our employees kulesibhedlela
Ladies and gentlemen.

We are very grateful to have been invited to this important occasion of the Workers Day of Prayer. It is in moments like these where we draw strength and affirm each other of our responsibilities as bearers of hope to the thousands who come to us for various ailments.

Ten years ago when our then **State President, Tata Nelson Mandela** was speaking to people of your fraternity, he had this to say:

'The dignity of your profession will be enhanced by the quality of service you render and your success in cultivating and strengthening the caring ethos.'

Ladies and gentlemen, fellow citizens, I do not want to add anything to these wise words, save to say, we have our own Patients Rights Charter that must remain our guide in dealing with people in anguish, despair and trauma.

Let us also heed the stipulations of our very own Constitution especially as it pronounces in the **Bill of Rights** that:

Everyone has the right to life

Today we are here to say thank you for your commitment as we continue experiencing hardships and victories in a climate of a complexity of diseases, flourishing, seen and experienced in the past and current decades.

You all know that in the past, for the general well being of the populace, prevention through immunisation was sufficient to maintain the good health of the whole nation.

In this era of HIV and AIDS; era of MDR and XDR strains of Tuberculosis, all our capabilities, faculties, institutions and general morale get strained and it becomes difficult to cope.

As professionals in the coalface of this meander of disease, helplessness and mayhem, you are the people who understand this story better. We know how hard it is for you to cope especially with the dwindling number of health professionals that we are left with after the developed world had taken our best.

I want us to utilise this Day of Prayer to remember the 34 colleagues or staff members of this historic institution who lost their lives last year. I note with sadness that almost all of them died not as a result of accidents. It is at this juncture that I want to sent an appeal to this 3152 strong workforce that, please let us make use of the Employee Wellness Programme that we have access to. With all the problems and diseases that you deal with, some of which end up inflicting you as well, it worries that only 69 of you used the services of the Employee Wellness Programme last year.

By all accounts and standards, I repeat, it is no easy feat for a staff compliment of 3156 to deal and cope with **34 194 admissions** in a single year, that is 2006 and over and above that be instrumental in **7034 deliveries** in the same year. Today we are here to pray with you that you find strength to continue performing miracles to those who truly rely and depend on our skills, talents and compassion. We are saying the learning experience that gather here is immeasurable as King Edward institution is the third largest hospital in the country with a bed state of 922. **Mahatma** once intoned:

'Be the change that you want to see in the world'

Please do appreciate the fact that when the government of the people took reigns in 1994, health care for the majority of our people was scandalous and non-existent in other areas. The Community Health Centres; Clinics and hospitals that we are now providing for rural communities in particular, need personnel, they need YOU.

In his State of the Nation address beginning of last year, our Honourable President, **Thabo Mbeki**, talked of the further expansion of the health infrastructure, the refurbishment of existing clinics and hospitals, and the re-opening of Nursing Colleges to increase the numbers of health professionals.

Ladies and gentlemen, here in KZN we are fortunate that we never closed our Nursing Colleges. This very institution is a testimony to that, as at this very juncture, we are constantly monitoring the performance of the **273 nursing students** that we have here. We want them to succeed so that they can ease the burden on the shoulders of both our nurses and patients.

To the hospital CEO, **Bhekiswayo Mboneni**, we want you to know that the Department is very proud of the initiatives that you continue undertaking, especially these:

- An agreement and a co-operation with Clothing and textile union for treatment of HIV and AIDS clients who are employed by clothing and textile industries. .
- The hosting of delegates from US, Uganda, Nigeria others directly referred by National Department of Health, others via the UKZN medical school.
- Your participation in Take a Girl Child to work initiative; as well as
- Your hosting of 20 school children from Umsinga area referred by the premier's dept.

All of us here must again recommit to the People's Contract and leave this place knowing that we are trying all we can to live up to our motto of **Fighting Disease; Fighting Poverty and Giving Hope.**

I thank you.