



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
CO-OPERATIVE GOVERNANCE,
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS & TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS

Inaugural Staff Address by MEC for CoGHSTA, Mr Pule Shayi.

Date: 11 September 2026

Time: 10h00

Venue: Hensa Towers, Polokwane

Programme Director,

Head of Department, Dr Modjadji Malahlela,

Senior Management,

And all dedicated staff of the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs,

Leadership of organized labor unions PSA and NEHAWU

Good morning.

Few days ago, the Premier of our Province, Dr Phophi Ramathuba invited us to serve in her Executive Council and directed that we serve the people of Limpopo through the Portfolio of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlement and Traditional Affairs. A responsibility we accepted with deeper sense of humility.

We met your HOD in the course of duty in Seshego when opened handed over a state-of-the-art water treatment plant and some colleagues as we proceeded to Kroomkloof, Dilaeneng and Maokeng respectively.

Recently, your Executive Management led an on-boarding exercise to initiate me into the workings of the department. More than two-third of the workforce in the department is

unionized either under NEHAWU or PSA. It made sense and was only fair and proper that the on-boarding exercise continues with organised labour which we met for an introductory session a few days ago. I must from the onset appreciate every effort from both Executive Management and Organised Labour to integrate me into the CoGHSTA family.

We now appear before you, men and women who are at the coalface of the departmental mandate, whose everyday contributions consolidate better Limpopo communities. With deep sense of delight, we feel privileged to join you and be part of this family.

My message is simple: You are not just employees. You are agents of change. Every housing subsidy you process is a step toward dignity. Every title deed you register is a step toward security. Every municipality you support is a step toward better service delivery. Every traditional council you empower is a step toward social cohesion.

We do not want you to underestimate the importance of your work. None of us must sedate ourselves into thinking, “we are just public servants.” We are the hands and feet of the revolution.

Together we are called upon to take forward the aspirations of our people led by the 7th Administration, with our focus being on effective delivery of services meant to uplift the lives of our people.

We are 32 years into our democracy. We are the inheritors of a struggle that was fought by giants—by men and women who sacrificed their lives so that we could stand here today. We are the beneficiaries of the Freedom Charter, which declared that “there shall be houses, security, and comfort.”

But we are also the ones who must deliver on that promise.

Our mandate is to ensure that every household in Limpopo has access to adequate housing. Our mandate is to support municipalities to deliver water, sanitation, and basic services. Our mandate is to preserve and promote the institution of traditional leadership. Our mandate is to build integrated, sustainable human settlements. Our mandate is to restore the dignity of our people.

Let me share what I have heard.

I heard that our Administration is predominantly reflecting an aged workforce and struggling to meet policy imperatives on youth, women and compliance on percentages related to persons with disabilities. On the one hand, we boast a professional, skilled and coherent workforce.

In Human Settlements, I heard that we have delivered beyond expectations—4,532 housing units against a target of 2,923. That is a remarkable achievement. But I also heard that blocked projects remain, that the ISUPG budget has been slashed, and that bulk infrastructure funding is critically short. I heard that Traditional Authority disputes are holding up 6,500 sites, and that some municipalities refuse to cluster villages.

We achieved 71% of our targets. We completed 480 homes and handed over 72 title deeds—meaning 480 families now have shelter and 72 families have legal ownership of their land. While the overall achievement is an improvement from the previous financial year, we fell short on servicing sites and approving subsidies due to the late start of projects, project delays and municipal bottlenecks. We must correct this immediately.

In Cooperative Governance, I heard that you achieved 100% of your quarterly targets. That is commendable. But I also heard that we still have struggling municipalities that approximate dysfunctionality. I heard that Water War Rooms are inactive in most districts. I heard that 1,228 settlements remain unserved and underserved by water and sanitation. In Financial Management Services, I heard that we have an unqualified audit opinion—a solid foundation to gravitate towards a clean audit. But I also heard that Internal Audit findings are not being resolved, and that we are underspending overall while two programmes are overspending.

Out of our R2.583 billion total budget, we spent R566.4 million in the first quarter—achieving 84% of our targets and spending 22% of our total allocation across our four programmes.

In Traditional Affairs, I heard that 141 Traditional Councils have been constituted. But I also heard that 24 remain unconstituted, that 231 vacancies exist in Traditional Councils, and that 53 illegal initiation schools were discovered.

A missed target is not failure; it is an opportunity to adjust and improve. Unspent money is not just a number. Unspent money means unbuilt homes, unserved sites and delayed services. Every unspent rand is a broken promise to the people of Limpopo.

One day, Nasrudin was searching for something on the ground outside his house. His neighbor came by and asked, "What are you looking for?"

"I lost my key," Nasrudin replied.

The neighbour got down on his hands and knees to help. After a few minutes, the neighbour asked, "Where exactly did you drop it?"

"In my house," said Nasrudin.

"Then why are we searching here?" asked the astonished neighbour.

"Because," said Nasrudin, "the light is better here!"

That story, my dear colleagues, is for all of us.

We have been searching for solutions in the light of reports, in the comfort of our offices, in the familiarity of our routines. But the real problems—the keys to our challenges—are in the dark places: in dysfunctional municipalities, in unresolved disputes, in stalled projects, in communities that feel forgotten.

We must be willing to go into the darkness. We must be willing to get our hands dirty. We must stop looking where the light is simply better and start looking where the problem actually is.

These are the challenges we face. But they are not insurmountable.

From institutional performance, I am an astute student of Susan Annunzio's framework of performance centres.

In her 20/60/20 core principles, Annunzio argues against focusing solely on fixing low performers. Instead, she suggests leveraging the top 20%—your change leaders and high-potential performers—to influence the middle 60% who are neutral, while diminishing the influence of the bottom 20% who resist change. The goal is to "move the middle" to achieve sustainable growth.

The Three Groups

Top 20% (Change Leaders):

Self-motivated and energized by challenges. These are your innovators. Annunzio advises publicly rewarding and privately nurturing them to help drive change.

Middle 60% (The Majority):

The swing vote. They typically defer to others for guidance and are neither strongly for nor against change. Your goal is to move this group by winning them over.

Bottom 20% (Resisters):

Critical and resistant to change. The strategy is to diminish their power and influence so they do not stall progress.

The Core Strategy

The rule flips traditional management on its head. Instead of wasting energy on the bottom 20%, Annunzio says leaders should leverage the top 20% to influence the massive middle 60%. If you win the middle, you build unstoppable momentum.

To turn these lessons into success, we must uphold four fundamentals of discipline, which does not exist for its own sake but should be understood as a weapon of the struggle:

- Punctuality – consistently being on time.
- Creativity and Innovation – exploiting technology and finding smarter ways of working.
- Personal Growth – developing yourself into a force to be reckoned with.
- Fairness and Integrity – recognizing effort, empowering staff and providing opportunities for growth.

Closing

If you were to ask me what is the most important thing in the world, I would say it is the thing that is most needed at the time.

And if you proceed to ask, “What is that thing?”

I would say: It depends.

When you are thirsty, it is water.

When you are hungry, it is bread.

When you are lost, it is a map.

When you are in darkness, it is light.

Then the question becomes: “What is most needed now in the department to fulfil our mandate?”

I would say: “What is most needed now is for each of us to do our part.”

Let us share the burden towards 04 November 2026 when the country will be going for local government elections. We have a huge responsibility to ensure a smooth transition from the 5th to the 6th term of local government administration. We therefore have a responsibility to ensure urgent finalisation of the hand-over reports and draft action plans for the incoming administration.

Our collaboration with partners like SALGA and Provincial Treasury should be strengthened.

Behind every number in our report is a person. Behind every completed home is a family. Behind every title deed is a mother or grandmother who finally owns her land. Behind every supported municipality is a community waiting for clean water and usable roads. You are not just workers—you are building this nation.

Our shared vision is clear: a Limpopo where every citizen is valued, every community is empowered, and exemplary governance is the standard. This vision requires daily commitment from each one of us to exhibit discipline, innovation, fairness and unwavering service.

It starts with this department. It starts with each one of us brightening our own corners. Personally, I believe in each one of you.

Dankie. Ngiyabonga.