FREEDOM DAY 2012 CELEBRATIONS
MEDIA LAUNCH – STATEMENT BY MEC XOLISWA TOM

Freedom Day marks a very important milestone in the history of South Africa. It is an annual celebration of South Africa’s first non-racial democratic elections that took place on 27 April 1994. It is a day that represents peace, unity, and the restoration of human dignity of all South Africans. In the spirit of building a South Africa that belongs to all, Freedom Day celebrations are intended to unite all South Africans in consolidating our country’s democracy. In the Eastern Cape, we took a resolution to celebrate not just the day, but the whole month because we believe, as the government and the people of this land, we have a lot to celebrate and this cannot only be done only in one day. It is in that light that we are engaging in various activities as the various departments and our partners.

This year’s Freedom Day is celebrated in the context of the centenary celebrations of the oldest Liberation Movement in Africa, the African National Congress. We owe this freedom to the matrys of this land, who sacrificed their lives to ensure that the bondages of oppression are ripped apart so that all the people of this land can enjoy a decent life. Through this Freedom Day, we shall therefore be remembering and honouring those who have fallen on the way, fighting for our freedom.

The 2012 Freedom Day celebrations will be held at Mputi Village, Bhaziya Administrative Area in Mthatha. The theme for this year’s celebration is:

‘WORKING TOGETHER TO BUILD UNITY AND PROSPERITY FOR ALL’

The following will be the key elements of these celebrations:

- Unveiling of the Memorial Stone in honour of the Local Heroes
- Public Lecture on the history of the struggle with special focus of Bhaziya
- Literature and Heritage competition by local schools
- Screening of the President’s message live via the satellite

The day will be preceded by a number of other important events viz:

- 23 April – Celebration of the World Book Day. This will be a national event, hosted by the ‘Centre for the Book’. The Minister of Arts and Culture, Minister Paul Mashatile is expected to grace the occasion and be part of a door-to-door campaign in promotion of reading. This will be hosted at Mqanduli. On this day, besides donating books to various homes in Mqanduli, 6 schools will receive books to be accessed by learners.
- 24 April – The Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture will be opening a new Library at Mqanduli
- 25 April – We shall be launching the Magnificent Wednesday, a project in promotion of school sport. This will be a provincial launch and will be held in Bhaziya.
• Currently, the Department of Roads and Public Works is busy with school refurbishment and re-grading of access roads at Bhaziya. 175 homes will receive donations of heaters and blankets so as to equip them for the coming Winter season. In addition to that, the Department of Roads and Public Works will be conducting the registration of unemployed youth in the area so as to be able to assist with job opportunities.

• As is the government norm, services on wheels will be on site on the day of the event so as to assist the communities with their pressing needs from the government.

As mentioned earlier, through this Freedom Day, we shall be remembering and honouring those who have fallen on the way, fighting for our freedom. The community of Bhaziya has produced many unsung heroes and heroines and it is in recognition of their contribution that we are erecting a memorial stone in Bhaziya. 27 names, agreed upon by the community of the area, will be engraved on this memorial. The names are inclusive of local traditional leaders who were victims of the apartheid system, POQO members who were executed by the apartheid regime as a result of their involvement in the Mbhashe uprisings, local heroes whose houses were burnt down by the Transkei regime and the commanders of APLA and Umkhonto Wesizwe.

We are currently conducting a social history research in Bhaziya through Oral History and the information that we are going to gather will be availed for use by School Education Programmes.

I therefore implore the media here present to take note of the developments and assist in bringing such knowledge to our communities.

I thank you.

XOLISWA TOM (MEC for Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture)