

## **ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE ROLLOUT OF SUBSIDIZED GOVERNMENT HOUSES WITH SOLAR ENERGY HARVESTING ROOFTOPS**

As MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works, I extend a very warm welcome to members of our Fourth Estate who are our vibrant partners in information-sharing. I will not keep you here for too long as I am fully aware that you, just like our service delivery machinery, are chasing production deadlines.

Thirty years of freedom has seen us grow, both as a Department specifically and as a caring Government as a whole, in order to remove the stubborn remnants of Apartheid. The Peoples' demands in the Freedom Charter are very clear. Our marching orders were to provide "Houses, Security and Comfort for All".

To restore dignity to once-forgotten families, we delivered close to 600 000 houses in this province since 1994. We realized that it is more than mere houses and shelter that we needed to provide. We changed our core focus from "Housing" to 'Human Settlements' and grew from a provider of RDP houses to the most-needy and forgotten in our Province to the planner, developer and builder of sustainable livelihoods.

The three elements of "Houses", "Security" and "Comfort" are all links to the chain of our service delivery so that we can put our mantra of providing homes where our people can live, work, pray and play into practice.

Section 26(1) of the Constitution states that everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing. But what exactly does “adequate” mean to you? To us, it entails comfort and security and the adequacy of basic services such as water, sanitation and electricity. To this end, we increased the size of our subsidized houses from below 30 square metres during the first few years following the dawn of democracy to the current 45 square metres. In addition, the 30% of the Human Settlements Development Grant (HSDG) that we set aside to install bulk services is enabling the completion of blocked housing projects. Towards addressing water shortages, members of the media here will recall that it is now the 12th year since we as KZN initiated the water harvesting solution in the form of “water-harvesting tanks” for rural households.

But what about electricity? As a progressive Government, all our initiatives are aimed at improving the quality of household life, while contributing to the economy. This brings us to the reason why we are all here today.

I am here today to share with the public, through your print, broadcast and electronic platforms, the rollout of our BNG houses with solar energy harvesting rooftops. Besides ensuring the element of comfort to our people and keeping in mind that the number of households in KwaZulu-Natal have now grown to 2,9 million households, we are supplementing our initiative of fitting all new houses with energy-saving equipment with solar panels to ease the stress on our electricity grid.

The rolling out of subsidized houses with solar panels starts here in uMgungundlovu District Municipality with the uMshwathi Phase 3 Housing

Project. I granted approval for the realignment of the subsidy quantum in line with the 2023 subsidy quantum on 9 February 2024 which saw the value of this project increase to just over R118 million. And then, five (5) days ago I approved an additional R12.6 million for the scope of work to include the installation of solar panels. The total value of this Project is now just over R131 million.

This Phase 3 of this Project will yield 623 out of a total of 2 922 houses. Thirty of the 177 sites, approved through our Serviced Sites Programme, were identified for Military Veterans. It is indeed symbolic that our Veterans will be the first to benefit from the rollout of these solar harvesting systems as they have made selfless contributions towards removing us from the darkness of inequality.

We are going to forge ahead with the rollout of solar panels as this initiative is also expected to result in economic opportunities, job creation, and skills transfer, particularly for youth, women, people with disabilities and military veterans.

Progressive interventions such as these are what makes us fully competent, capable and caring enough to provide “Houses, Security and Comfort for All”.

I thank you all for being present here today to share this ground-breaking moment with us.