

Speech by Premier Dr Phophi Ramathuba during the Welcoming of Newly Appointed Healthcare Professionals and Support Staff, Bolivia Lodge, Polokwane

06 May 2025

Programme Director,  
MEC for Health, Ms Dieketseng Mashego,  
Acting Head of Department, Dr Ndwamato,  
Deputy Director Generals,  
Directors and Managers,  
Clinical Managers,  
Esteemed Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ndi matsheloni, Thobela, Avuxeni, Good morning, Goeie more,

Allow me to begin by painting a picture many of you know too well, a story of resilience. A story of a young student who studied by candlelight, whose family often went to bed without food, yet never gave up on the dream to serve.

It is a story of sleepless nights, of books stained with tears and perseverance. A story of sacrifice, late-night studying, early morning clinical rounds, and final exams that seemed endless. A story that has led you, against all odds, to this very moment.

You did not stumble upon this place. You journeyed here with purpose. Today, your story of struggle becomes a story of service. Today, your hard work becomes our province's healing power. You are no longer students or job seekers. You are now pillars of hope in the tapestry of Limpopo's healthcare system.

It gives me immense pride and joy to formally welcome 412 newly appointed healthcare professionals and support staff to the family of public servants in Limpopo. This is not just a warm reception, but it is a celebration of your triumphs and a call to purpose.

When I delivered the State of the Province Address earlier this year, I made a commitment to bolster the capacity of our public healthcare system by prioritizing the recruitment of health professionals. I instructed the MECs for Finance and Health to work together and prioritise the appointment of health professionals and other critical personnel. Today, we gather as a testament to that promise fulfilled.

The cohort we welcome today includes Medical and Dental Officers, Professional Nurses, Pharmacists, Occupational Therapists, Clinical Psychologists, Diagnostic Radiographers, Emergency Medical Services personnel, Support Staff, Quantity Surveyors, and Artisans. These are not just job titles. These are vital roles in the mission to deliver quality healthcare to the people of our province.

Your appointment forms part of a broader provincial strategy to strengthen our health facilities and bring quality healthcare closer to our communities. You are the change

agents who will make this strategy a living reality. But to do so, you must embody not just skill and knowledge but also values and ethics.

The purpose of this induction is not only to orient you to the operations of our department but to align you with the principles that define public service. At the centre of these is the Batho Pele ethos, Putting People First.

We are welcoming you during a time when public trust in healthcare must be reinforced. We are hearing troubling reports, nationally and globally, of medical professionals betraying their oath and engaging in unspeakable acts, including sexual assault and misconduct. Let me be clear, this government will not tolerate such behavior. There is no place in our system for those who prey on the vulnerable.

We are custodians of life, not abusers of trust. We are defenders of dignity, not violators of the same. Any healthcare worker who breaks this sacred contract with society will not only be removed but will face the full might of the law. In cases of sexual assault and harassment, our bias is clear, we stand with the victim, always. We will protect, support, and fight for those who turn to us in their most vulnerable state.

As you embark on this noble path, never forget your duty to serve with dignity, empathy, and unwavering integrity. In the words of the late Nelson Mandela, “What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.” Let these words not just inspire you, but guide you daily.

This is not just a job. This is a vocation. Every person you treat, every patient you counsel, every wound you dress, every pill you dispense, carries the weight of someone’s hope. There is no room for mediocrity. In our field, errors can cost lives. In some departments, a mistake can be corrected. In health, a mistake may mean irreversible loss.

Approach each day with discipline and compassion. Be solutions-driven. Do not become the problem your employer must fix. We need your energy, your innovation, and your leadership. We are not just welcoming workers, but we are building a team of health champions.

Remember, our healthcare system thrives on teamwork. A wise African proverb says, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” No one role is more important than the other. Doctors, nurses, pharmacists, radiographers, administrators, cleaners, porters, EMS drivers, you are all indispensable. Let collaboration be your compass.

Now that you are part of the public service, let excellence be your everyday standard. Uphold the ethics of your profession. Speak out when you see wrongdoing. Mentor those who come after you. Be lifelong learners. Innovate. Do not just heal bodies but heal the systems. Do not just treat symptoms, but address the causes.

You are the future of Limpopo's health sector. You are the leaders who will shape tomorrow's hospitals, clinics, and policy reforms. We are not just investing in you, but we are entrusting you with the heartbeat of our people.

As you begin this new journey, always remember why you started. Think of your parents and grandparents who prayed over your dreams. Think of the rural child who will walk 10 kilometers just to see you. Think of the mother who will hold her baby for the first time because of your hands. Think of the life you will save that may one day save another.

In conclusion, I want you to look around this room and realize that you are part of something bigger than yourselves. You are now part of a movement to redefine healthcare in Limpopo. You are stepping into a chapter of service that is sacred, powerful, and deeply human.

Appreciate the opportunity you have been given. Many are still searching. Many are still hoping. But you today are chosen. Chosen not for comfort, but for contribution. Chosen not for title but for transformation. Chosen not to take from the system, but to give your best to it.

Let this opportunity ignite in you a fire to serve with distinction. Wear your uniform with pride. Walk the halls of our clinics and hospitals with humility. Speak to your patients with kindness. Let your hands be steady, your heart be firm, and your spirit unshaken.

Welcome to the Department of Health. Welcome to the journey of impact. Welcome to service.

I thank you.