

TRIBUTE BY DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE FUNERAL OF THE LATE MR MAKGALEMELE DONALD MOLEPO AT JACK BOTES HALL, POLOKWANE MUNICIPALITY, CAPRICORN DISTRICT

26 April 2026

Programme Director,  
The Molepo Family, and especially His Worship Cllr John Mpe  
ANC Secretary-General, Mr Fikile Mabula,  
ANC Limpopo Provincial Executive Committee, led by Provincial Secretary, Vhamusanda Vho-Madadzhe,  
Speaker of the Limpopo Legislature, Dr Makoma Makhurupetje,  
Deputy Speaker, Ms Tebogo Mamorobela,  
Members of the Executive Council,  
Executive Mayors and Mayors,  
Councillors,  
Kgoshi Molepo and other Traditional Leaders,  
Faith-Based Leaders,  
Community Members,  
Fellow Mourners,

Avuxeni, Ndi Matsheloni, Thobela, Good Morning, Goeie Môre,

They say that when a star burns out, its light continues to travel across the universe for generations, a golden echo against the velvet darkness. Today, we gather not only to mourn the passing of a man, but to honour a life whose light will continue to shine long after his departure. We are here to celebrate a torch that burned with rare intensity, purpose and unwavering commitment to humanity. A man who some of us have to come to acknowledge through his son the Executive Mayor of

Polokwane, His Worship Cllr John Makoro Mpe. Yet there are other voices that tell us that this star cannot be confined to one space alone, all his daughters and other people whose lives he has touched bear testimony to the universal nature of his character.

Ntate Makgalemele Donald Molepo did not merely exist, he lived a life of meaning and service. He walked this earth as though every sunrise was a sacred invitation to serve, to uplift and to love. His presence was as gentle as a breeze, yet his impact carried the force of a mighty river, carving pathways of hope through the hardest terrains of adversity.

Programme Director, a profound silence has now descended upon us, but it is a silence that speaks volumes. The echo of his departure reverberates through the villages he served, the schools he transformed and the community structures he strengthened. It resonates deeply in the hearts of both the young and the old who were privileged to experience his wisdom, guidance and kindness.

Indeed, Ntate Molepo has left an indelible footprint in the sands of time, a legacy built on the firm foundation of integrity, humility and compassion. He was a pillar of strength, a mentor to many and a servant of the people. Today, we take solace in the belief that he returns to his ancestors, having fulfilled his purpose with distinction and honour.

Fellow Mourners, we are gathered here in large numbers, from all walks of life, to pay our final respects to a truly remarkable individual. A man who was loved by many. To describe him merely as a “community leader” would be to understate the magnitude of his contribution. He was a unifier, a builder of bridges and a champion of collective progress. He believed deeply in the power of unity, bringing people together where

there was division and encouraging dialogue where there was misunderstanding.

As government, we are profoundly grateful for his role in advancing community development and strengthening local structures. He ensured that the voices of the people were heard and that their needs were addressed. Ntate Molepo did not lead from behind a desk; he led from the front, engaging directly with the community and inspiring others to rise to the call of service. His life serves as a powerful example to all entrusted with leadership, that true leadership is rooted in humility, accountability and service to the people.

As our founding father, Nelson Mandela, once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” Ntate Molepo lived these words daily. He worked tirelessly to ensure that every child, regardless of their background, had access to quality education and the opportunity to succeed.

As a school leader, he did more than manage institutions, he nurtured them. He instilled discipline balanced with compassion, transforming ordinary schools into centres of excellence and shaping generations of learners into responsible citizens.

We pay tribute to the remarkable teachers of Limpopo, especially from the generation of Mr Molepo, whose dedication and commitment played a pivotal role in shaping successful leaders, including our governor, Auditor General, Statistician General and many others.

As we remember his legacy, let us also reiterate our call for more institutions of higher learning to be established here in Limpopo since we have the significant number of matriculants we proudly produce each year.

As the African proverb reminds us, “When an elder dies, a library burns.” Yet, through the many lives he touched, the educators he mentored and the values he instilled, that library has not been lost, it lives on in all of us who had the privilege to learn from him.

As we prepare to lay him to rest, we do not say goodbye. Instead, we say: Robala ka kgotso Ngwashimogolo, Makgalemele abo Morwa Mokanyana, setlogolo sa Mogano.

We say robala boroko.

We say thank you for the light you have given us.

Your life was a beautiful song. Though the music has come to an end, its melody will continue to echo in our hearts forever.

Ntate Molepo has fought the good fight, he has finished the race and he has kept the faith.

Rest well, servant of the people. Rest in the eternal peace of the Lord. Your legacy is safe in our hands.

I thank you.