

SPEECH BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING MANDELA
MONTH CELEBRATION AT MOOKGOPONG OLD AGE HOME,
MODIMOLLE-MOOKGOPONG, WATERBERG DISTRICT

22 July 2026

Programme Director,

Members of the Executive Council,

Executive Mayor of Waterberg District Municipality, Cllr Jack Maeko,

Mayor of Modimolle-Mookgophong Local Municipality, Cllr Anna Mboweni,

Councillors,

Traditional Leaders,

Faith Based Leaders,

Representatives of the Mookgophong Old Age Centre,

Members of the Community,

Most importantly, our beloved elders,

Members of the Media,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

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

Like a golden tapestry woven by time, Mandela Month arrives to cast a brilliant light on the values of compassion, selflessness and human dignity. It is a sacred season that echoes the heartbeat of the father of our nation, Nelson Mandela, calling upon us to quiet the noise of our own lives and give

our hands, our hearts and our 67 minutes to those who built the very roads we walk upon.

Today, this vibrant spirit of service brings us to the Mookgophong Old Age Home, not merely to fulfill a calendar date, but to ignite a flame of enduring gratitude for our grandparents and parents. Our elders are the vital anchors of our households, offering unconditional love, resilience and a profound sense of identity whose presence bridges generational divides to keep us firmly grounded.

Our gathering here today is a vital link in a golden chain of compassion stretching across every corner of our province. Throughout this entire month, our provincial government has rolled out a continuous series of impactful activities to uplift the vulnerable and we are marching forward with this momentum every single day until the 29th of July 2026. From Sekhukhune to Vhembe, Mopani to Capricorn, and right here in Waterberg, we are actively taking government services directly to our people, painting our province with the colours of selflessness and ensuring that the legacy of Madiba lives through practical action.

Programme Director, our elders are our living libraries; they carry a beautiful wealth of life experience and history that serves as a compass to help us face the future with courage. When a society forgets its elders, it burns down its own history, but when we cherish them, we safeguard our cultural heritage. Beyond emotional support, our seniors provide the practical wisdom and stability that help households navigate life's complex challenges. Their active involvement in daily family life fosters deep intergenerational bonding, ensures a robust social support system and creates a nurturing environment where all members feel valued and secure.

Therefore, taking care of our elders is not a heavy burden to be hidden away behind closed doors; it is a collective, non-negotiable responsibility that rests on the shoulders of our entire society and community. Government alone cannot fill every empty space and families cannot walk this journey isolated. We require our local businesses, civil society, neighbors and young people to stand up and create a protective wall of support around our senior citizens.

We see this magnificent spirit alive today within the Mookgophong Service Centre for the Aged. Since its registration as an NPO in 2006 and with full funding from the Department of Social Development since 2008, this facility has stood as a beacon of hope. Managed by a dedicated board of retired public servants and professionals and operating with just three full-time personnel, it serves 132 registered elders between the ages of 63 and 95, including 16 vulnerable citizens living with disabilities.

Through dietician-approved meals, health screenings, the Golden Games, and Food-on-Wheels, this centre protects the dignity of our people. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Departments of Health and Social Development, the Modimolle-Mookgophong Local Municipality, and local partners like Baboos Hardware and Rooiberg Mine for helping to maintain this house of care.

However, as the Limpopo Provincial Government, we cannot speak of dignity without confronting the uncomfortable truths our elders face daily. We have looked closely at this centre and we see the daily hardships: the unsafe and ageing infrastructure, the lack of suitable transport for beneficiaries, the limited physical space, the persistent water shortages, the shortage of personnel and the urgent security concerns regarding fencing, gates and safety lighting. To our beloved elders sitting here today: we hear you, we see your struggles and we promise you that your government will not look away.

Programme Director, we stand here today to give our firm, unyielding promise that government will continue working tirelessly to provide a safer, secure, and dignified environment for you. We are already actively engaged in plans for the refurbishment and upgrading of this centre, while exploring long-term solutions for substantial renovation and future redevelopment. Furthermore, we are formally processing interventions to address your requests for a secure borehole for water security, reliable transport, additional care personnel, and reinforced security infrastructure.

The Limpopo Provincial Government remains completely committed to protecting and promoting your rights, ensuring that no elderly person is ever left behind or forgotten in our development agenda.

To the caregivers and volunteers: your patience and compassion keep the light of Madiba burning brightly. To our beloved elders: we love you, we honour you and we thank you for your lifelong contribution to our democracy.

As we continue to celebrate Mandela Month, I wish to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the people of Limpopo for embracing the spirit and legacy of our icon Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela through countless acts of compassion and selfless service. Across our province, individuals, community organisations, faith-based institutions, businesses and government departments reached out to those in need by donating food, clothing, school necessities, building homes, supporting the elderly and uplifting the vulnerable.

Through these humanitarian acts, you have not only changed the lives of many, but you have also restored hope, dignity and a sense of belonging to those who needed it most. Your kindness reminds us that Mandela's legacy is not honoured through words alone, but through our willingness to serve others and build a caring society where no one is left behind.

Happy Mandela Month to you all.

I thank you.