

DRAFT

Address by the Deputy Minister of Correctional Services

Mr. Thabang Makwetla, MP

Open Day for Visitors to Correctional Centres

Amathole Management Area, Eastern Cape

27 September 2014

- **Programme Director**
- **Acting National Commissioner: Mr. Zach Modise**
- **Chief Operations Officer: Ms. N. Jolingana**
- **Eastern Cape Regional Commissioner: Mr. N.C. Breakfast**
- **Chief Deputy Commissioners, Regional Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners**
- **All other Correctional Services Officials**
- **Justice, Crime Prevention & Security Cluster Representatives**
- **Rev. Moses and all Religious Leaders**
- **Other Community Leaders**
- **The Community of Middelburg and surrounding areas**
- **Our Offenders and their Families**
- **Media**
- **Distinguished Guests**

Indeed, it is a special honour for us today, as senior management of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), to be interacting with the people of the Eastern Cape on the last day of Corrections Week 2014. As some of you may be aware, yesterday (26 September) was Africa Corrections Day. Working together with our brothers and sisters on our continent, we remain committed to building a sustainable, and humane, correctional system in Africa.

In South Africa, as part of Corrections Week from 21st to 27th September, we have been to various parts of our country promoting public understanding, and appreciation, of correctional services as a key player in ensuring public safety. Since 1994, as part of the move from prisons to corrections by our democratic government, DCS has been on a 20-year journey towards a humane correctional system for a safer South Africa. This journey includes:

- Reduction of the inmate population by 30,000 over the past ten years.
- Reduction in the number of remand detainees, with the current number of remand detainees standing at 26% - six percent lower than the global average of 32%.
- Improvement of security, with escapes reduced by 99.97% since 1995.
- Increase in access to accredited full-time correctional schools, from one in 2009 to 14 in 2014.
- Rated as the 3rd best government institution in fighting fraud and corruption, with 93% conviction rates in disciplinary hearings.
- Increased victim participation in rehabilitation, and parole, considerations.

Effective rehabilitation helps break the cycle of crime in our society, and this is being achieved by DCS through, amongst others, intensifying inmate skills development programmes and offender labour optimisation. However, corrections is not the sole responsibility of government. Corrections is a societal responsibility. Based on the ideals contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, all South Africans should contribute to maintaining and protecting a just, peaceful and safe society. We should do this by upholding the law and justice system, and promoting the social responsibility, and human development, of all citizens.

Therefore, the approach of our government is that correction (both self-correction and the correction of others) is inherent in good citizenship. To this end, the families of offenders have a critical role to play in rehabilitation. Hence, these types of gatherings, and family open days at correctional centres, must be intensified. As DCS, we want to convey our sincere thanks, and appreciation, to all families who took the time to be here with us today.

Incarceration presents a crisis for families. From the time an individual is accused to the period following release from incarceration and community reintegration, the entire family goes through numerous challenges. Incarceration places a huge burden on families of offenders, and they can be affected in a number of ways. Whether it be a parent imprisoned and leaving the remaining parent to cope on their own, or a single mother imprisoned leaving the child to go into care – or maybe the parents of a youth offender trying to cope with imprisonment of their child – in all these cases and many more, we see very unique situations as to how, and why, a son, daughter, mother, father, husband or wife gets to become an offender, and also the effect their actions have on those closest to them. When we think about victims of crime, we have a traditional perspective – the person mugged, or the householders burgled – and that is, of course, correct and extremely important. But crime creates other innocent victims, such as the family, and friends, of those incarcerated. Lives are turned upside down, children separated from parents, parents split from children, restrictions placed on access - all of which can create enormous pressure on family structures, the ramifications of which can, in turn, be very concerning. That's why the families of offenders are crucial. Inmates are less likely to re-offend if good family relationships are maintained throughout their sentence. Positive contact with family, and friends, on release can help successful reintegration.

By acknowledging that inmates are individuals with different needs, we acknowledge that, as well as punishing them for their crimes, more needs to be done to also help their families. As the Ministry of Justice and Correctional Services, we are determined to make our system function better – better for victims of crime, better at rehabilitating our offenders, parolees and probationers, better for our correctional officials and better for the innocent families, and friends, of loved ones who are in our correctional centres.

DCS recognises the family as the basic unit of society. The family is also the primary level at which correction should take place. The community, including schools, churches and other related institutions, is the secondary level at which corrections should take place. The state is regarded as being the overall facilitator and driver of corrections, with DCS rendering the ultimate level of corrections. Our successes in crime prevention, and rehabilitation, are intimately connected to how effectively we are able to address the anomalies in South African families that put people at risk with the law at the primary level – that is at family level.

Correction is, therefore, not just the duty of a particular department. It is the responsibility of all social institutions and individuals (starting within the family and educational, religious, sport and cultural institutions), and a range of government departments.

In conclusion, moral regeneration and promotion of the ethics enshrined in the Constitution requires special attention to be paid to the creation of an environment that allows for self-discipline, social independence, on-going family support and community support as well as reintegration of offenders into a substantially transformed community. It is the vision of our correctional system that, by the time offenders are released into society, they will have developed an attitude of desiring to serve their families, and society, with competence, excellence and responsibility. However, without general moral regeneration and social crime prevention within broader society, the trigger factors for recidivism are likely to come into play.

The promotion of the spirit, and practice, of goodwill and sincere interaction between offenders and their community and family, and within the correctional centre community, is a vehicle through which rehabilitation can be promoted. The involvement of inmates in caring for their community within the correctional centre environment, in taking responsibility for their fellow inmates and their families, are stepping stones to the reintegration of these individuals into a society equipped to strengthen the moral fibre.

The Department is fully committed to working with other government departments and societal institutions in advocating for the restoration of families, and communities, as viable entities in which there is good governance and socio-economic viability, security and stability. This restoration of viability, and good governance, is essential if communities are to benefit optimally from government's service delivery in various areas of its work.

Finally, to all of you here today, be an optimist and look for opportunity in every difficult circumstance. Take your difficult situation as a testing time for your patience and determination. Your struggle today will inculcate the strength which you need for tomorrow. So never give up.

THANK YOU.