

**SPEECH FOR MS BARBARA THOMPSON, DEPUTY MINISTER OF ENERGY,
AT THE SWITCH ON FUNCTION: MANGAUNG MUNICIPALITY**

1 March 2013

Mayor of Mangaung Metro Municipality,
Municipality Manager Mangaung Metro,
Councilors of Mangaung Metro
Representatives of all Stake Holders such as SALGA, COGTA, Centlec and Eskom
Government officials from provincial and national departments and my own department, Department
of Energy
The people of Mangaung and Kgotsong in particular
Good day to all of you!
Dumelang

I would like to thank you for affording me the opportunity to address you today.

Our presence here is a good reminder of the importance of electricity in the lives of our people. Because as we say, electricity really is LIFE! Without it we struggle to do so many things that others take for granted – like having hot water readily available, being able to cook food for our families with ease, charging our cell phones so that we can stay in touch with our families and friends wherever they may be.

In the past financial years Department of Energy (DoE) has allocated R115 million to Mangaung Metro in order to eradicate existing backlog. DoE has allocated R15 million to Mangaung Metro during 2012/13 financial year for electrification of 900 households which the Municipality has managed to implement and finish within the given time; hence we are celebrating this switch on today.

An amount of R42 million has been allocated to Mangaung Metro in the next financial year to continue with service delivery of supplying neglected areas with electricity and we will continue to support the Municipality in future in delivering services to our people.

Although the electrification programme has made good progress regarding access to electricity in the country, the current roll out of new connections are not addressing all the needs of the communities in South Africa. Hence, a new Electrification Roadmap which among others outlines how backlogs in households without electricity will be electrified, has been developed and are in the process to be approved. A realistic roll-out plan is been developed as part of this Roadmap, which will utilise different technology mixes and funding options to achieve universal access to electricity by 2025 for all areas in South Africa.

One of the outcomes of the roadmap is the development of a National Electrification Master plan which the department is in the process to develop in partnership with Eskom. This Master plan will cover the entire country and will show areas that will be electrified via grid or non-grid options and will also show the roll-out sequence of the electrification projects based on least cost. This Master plan should be finalised in the latter half of 2013.

It is my hope and trust that our presence here at this switch-on event in a humble manner makes a value adding contribution in the lives of the community, and shows government's genuine desire to improve rural areas and turn them into dynamic areas for the sustainable growth of our country.

Through this programme, the Government is saying that instead of people migrating to the big cities in search for jobs and better opportunities; let us develop our rural areas in order for them to reach their full potential. There is absolutely no reason why your community cannot receive the same kind of services that the people who live in the big cities had for decades. The time of spending money on paraffin and candles is over now. We are here to ensure that our children do not study under the cover of darkness but under the light that will be provided by the electricity we are announcing today.

As the ANC government we are working tirelessly to reverse the inequalities of the past. It is our humble belief that this switch-on is an important step in bringing you this basic service - electricity which will enrich and enhance your lives at a personal, social, community and economic level.

In order to bring electricity to historically neglected areas such as you village, we have to make sure there is enough electricity, hence the need to build new power stations and substations. We cannot only rely on coal for electricity generation, but also have to look to other forms of electricity generation like wind, solar, water, nuclear and waste. In bringing electricity from these generation elements to each and every household, the Department of Energy is ensuring that our Government is getting into the houses of each one.

We want to get close to our people and improve their lives so that we can all do more in order for South Africa to become a better country in which we can all prosper.

Our ANC-led government is well on its way to achieve our objective of universal access to energy. Just yesterday the Minister of Finance announced that electrification will get a welcome boost by allocating R5,7 billion for the electrification of particularly poor households over the next three years. This money will be used to electrify 200 000 households per year over the next three years across all our provinces. This demonstrates the commitment of the ANC to ensure a dignified living for our people.

While these are achievements on which we can be proud, we must also understand that not all areas can be reached by grid electricity in the short term, and in those cases we are also implementing non-grid electrification technologies. Furthermore, the funding for electrification from National Government has to be applied and divided between all backlogs throughout the country.

To complement grid connections, various non-grid systems can also be installed in this municipality. The municipality is welcome to apply with my department for such assistance, especially for areas that are isolated, where the landscape is very unfavourable for grid electrification or where the nearest electricity point of supply is very far. Such areas qualify for non-grid connections.

While we must celebrate our achievements, we must also accept and understand that we all have a responsibility to use energy efficiently. Each and every household that benefits from the government's roll-out of the electrification programme, have a responsibility to ensure they look after the infrastructure.

I want to appeal to you that each member of the community has to look after the wires and infrastructure that has been installed and are still to be installed. This will ensure that the electricity that has been given to the community today, will still be here when I come back in the not too distant future.

If you see people tampering or stealing your wires please report them immediately to the SAPS. In addition, the Municipality and Eskom cannot repair and upgrade your wires and make sure that there is electricity in the wires if each of you is not paying for the electricity that is consumed. So remember to budget for electricity costs in your weekly or monthly household budget.

In conclusion, Programme Director, it would be wrong for me not to urge all consumers in the country to use energy efficiently. We cannot invest billions of rands in energy generation and processing plants and continue to be blind to the need for all of us to be highly aware of our individual responsibility in using energy efficiently.

Please switch off all appliances when you are not using them. In this way we can all make our own small contribution in ensuring we use our scarce energy resources efficiently.

Thank you

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