Province of the
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COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE
& TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS

COGTA Newsletter

September 2026

"What difference are we making in the lives of the people we serve?"
-MEC Williams-



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Editorial Team



Mr Mamnkeli Ngam



Ms Anelisa Mabece



Mr Vuyani Sibene



Ms Sabo Dlelengana



Ms Zethu Sonjica



Editor: Ms Thando Sonjica

EDITORIAL COMMENT

This edition reflects a Department that is looking ahead while remaining firmly grounded in the realities facing the communities it serves. Across strategic planning, municipal governance, traditional leadership, disaster management, public participation and heritage, one message emerges clearly: our work must ultimately make a meaningful difference in people's lives.

This message was at the heart of COGTA's Strategic Planning Session in Port Alfred, where both MEC Zolile Williams and Head of Department Mr Vuyo Mlokothi challenged the Department to look beyond activities, plans and reports and focus instead on outcomes and impact. As the Eastern Cape approaches the 2026 Local Government Elections and the beginning of a new five-year local government cycle, the Department must ensure that its strategies respond to the changing governance environment and the needs of communities.

The work of strengthening local government cannot be separated from meaningful public participation. The 7th Provincial Public Participation, Integrated Development Planning and Rapid Response Advisory Forum highlighted the importance of maintaining open communication between government and communities, particularly around service delivery concerns and preparations for the elections. Effective governance requires communities to be informed, heard and placed at the centre of development planning.

Our responsibility also extends to building communities that are better prepared for disasters and the growing risks associated with severe weather and climate variability. The strategic engagement between Heads of Disaster Management Centres and Fire Services Chiefs demonstrated the importance of early-warning systems, integrated planning, technology, adequate capacity and coordinated action. Early warning becomes truly meaningful when it results in early action that protects lives, livelihoods and infrastructure.

Traditional leadership remains equally central to the Department's mandate. From the sitting of the Eastern Cape House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders to the restoration of the Mvezo Traditional Council and the memorial lecture honouring the late Nkosi Ngangomhlaba Matanzima, this edition reminds us that traditional leadership is both a custodian of our heritage and an important partner in governance and community development.

The celebration of Provincial Heritage Day further reinforces the significance of preserving our culture while building united, resilient and safer communities. This edition also pauses to recognise the people who have contributed to the work of our institutions. Their contribution forms part of the institutional memory upon which future generations of public servants will continue to build.

As we look towards the future, the challenge before us is clear. Good plans must become effective implementation.

Ultimately, our success will not be measured by the number of meetings we convene, reports we produce or plans we develop. It will be measured by whether our collective efforts improve governance, strengthen municipalities, build resilient communities and make a tangible difference in the everyday lives of the people we serve.

INFORMATION

+27 (0) 79 508 7571

thando.sonjica@eccogta.gov.za

www.eccogta.gov.za

Tyamzashe Building, Phalo Avenue, Bhisho

5605, Eastern Cape, Republic of South Africa

Private Bag X0035,Bhisho, 5605

This is a monthly newsletter published by the Directorate: Communication Management of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

MEC WILLIAMS CHALLENGES OFFICIALS TO TURN PLANS INTO MEANINGFUL CHANGE

By Thando Sonjica



MEC Williams and Deputy Director General Traditional Affairs -Mr Tandabantu Gwebindlala

The MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Zolile Williams, has challenged delegates attending the Department's Strategic Planning Session in Port Alfred to reflect on a critical question: "What difference are we making in the lives of the people we serve?"

Addressing officials on the opening day of the session, MEC Williams emphasised that the success of the Department should not be measured only by plans, policies and reports, but by tangible improvements in service delivery and the quality of life of communities across the Eastern Cape.

MEC Williams highlighted ongoing governance and service delivery challenges facing municipalities, while commending the province for achieving eight clean municipal audits. He stressed that positive audit outcomes must ultimately translate into stronger governance, sound financial management and increased public trust.

As part of efforts to strengthen municipal performance, the MEC announced his intention to revive and modernise Operation Clean Audit and integrate it into the Municipal Non-Negotiables Programme to drive accountability, institutional performance and service delivery excellence.

He also called for continuous training of municipal officials and stronger partnerships with institutions of higher learning to help build professional and capable local government institutions.

"Universities will have opportunities to work with us in developing the training programme for municipalities," said MEC Williams.

On municipal support, MEC Williams reaffirmed the Department's preference for interventions in line with Section 154, with a focus on strengthening the capacity of municipalities rather than taking over their functions. He said the Department would intensify support and capacity-building while strengthening monitoring, oversight and accountability.

Disaster management and climate resilience also featured prominently in the MEC's address. He said the anticipated El Niño conditions required proactive planning and improved disaster preparedness, including exploring satellite capabilities to help protect infrastructure and livestock during severe weather events. He highlighted the Eastern Cape's vulnerability, particularly in mountainous areas and communities dependent on gravel roads that may become inaccessible during flooding.

MEC Williams further called for the Provincial Disaster Management Centre to be adequately resourced, noting that it is currently understaffed. He identified specialised disaster-response resources that should be considered for procurement, including a helicopter, rubber ducks, snow vehicles, disaster-response trucks and two horse trailers.

"We need to communicate with everyone, every stakeholder, so that we are not caught off guard," said MEC Williams, emphasising the importance of coordinated preparation and communication.

Turning to traditional leadership institutions, the MEC acknowledged concerns raised by traditional leaders about their treatment within the Department. He called for accommodation requirements at the House of Traditional and Khoisan leaders to be addressed and proposed that responsibility for the construction of traditional councils should be moved away from Public Works.

MEC Williams also called for closer monitoring of the implementation of resolutions from the Traditional Leadership Summit.

"The resolutions have been compiled, and I need quarterly reports on their implementation," he said.

In preparation for the Summer Initiation Season, the MEC called for advocacy campaigns to commence and for rescue centres to be fully operational to support a safe initiation season.

The MEC also emphasised the important role of Community Development Workers (CDWs), calling for them to be provided with appropriate working tools and training. He said CDWs have an important role to play in monitoring the implementation of the Municipal Non-Negotiables.

He further called for greater private-sector participation in catalytic projects implemented through the District Development Model, highlighting the importance of partnerships in accelerating development and strengthening local economies.

Concluding his address, MEC Williams urged officials to use the Strategic Planning Session to move beyond identifying challenges and develop practical, implementable solutions that will strengthen local government, improve service delivery and deliver meaningful change in communities throughout the Eastern Cape. He reiterated that the ultimate measure of the Department's success must remain the difference it makes in the everyday lives of the people it serves.

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION FOCUSES ON IMPACT, GOVERNANCE AND FUTURE READINESS

By Thando Sonjica

Opening a two-day Strategic Planning Session in Port Alfred last month, Eastern Cape Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) Head of Department, Mr Vuyo Mlokothi, said the Department's ambition must be to build a COGTA that does not merely coordinate government, but one that enables government to work better together and ultimately improves the lives of the people of the Eastern Cape. The session brought together traditional leaders, representatives from sector departments, district and metro municipalities, labour unions, and senior departmental officials to reflect on the Department's future direction and strategic priorities.

Addressing delegates, Mr Mlokothi said that as the Department prepares for the 2026 Local Government Elections, the Eastern Cape faces a rapidly changing governance landscape. "Municipalities continue to experience governance, financial management and service delivery challenges, while the number of political parties contesting elections has increased significantly. This makes coalition governments and Governments of Local Unity more likely," he said.

The HOD challenged officials to move beyond reporting activities and instead focus on the impact of government interventions. "The key question is not 'What are we planning?' but 'What difference will our planning make?'" he said. Mr Mlokothi said the strategic planning session seeks to strengthen municipal governance and service delivery, enhance the role of Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership in development and governance, improve intergovernmental coordination, and ensure the Department is adequately prepared for the 2026 Local Government Elections.

"We will, after 4 November, usher in a new breed of local leaders alongside returning councillors and begin a new five-year governance cycle. In some municipalities, this cycle will also be led by newly appointed municipal managers," he said. Referring to statistics from the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), Mlokothi noted that the number of registered and contesting political parties has increased significantly over recent years.

"The political landscape has shifted considerably," he said.

He further highlighted the impact of population migration on local government representation in the province. "The Eastern Cape has experienced significant out-migration to other provinces, resulting in a reduction of municipal wards from 710 to 703. Amathole District Municipality has lost four wards, Chris Hani District Municipality two wards, while Sarah Baartman, OR Tambo and Alfred Nzo district municipalities have each lost one ward," he explained. HOD also underscored the unique traditional leadership landscape of the province.

"Seven of South Africa's eleven kingdoms are located in the Eastern Cape, yet there remains limited national appreciation of the unique fiscal challenges facing the province," he said. Against this backdrop, Mr Mlokothi stressed that the Department cannot afford a planning process that simply reports on past achievements and future intentions.

"We need a conversation that examines whether our interventions are producing the change and impact our communities expect. Furthermore, we must ensure that departmental priorities are aligned with community needs and development goals," he said.

He said the desired outcome of the session was a clear and honest assessment of current realities, agreement on what must change, and a shared commitment to priorities that will shape the Department's future direction. Mr Mlokothi explained that this year's strategic planning session was deliberately designed to be different from previous engagements.

"We have moved away from the traditional approach where programmes present what they have done and the audience simply receives information. Instead, we want to create a space for strategic conversations that challenge us, interrogate the evidence, draw insights from the field and ultimately help us make informed choices about the future direction of the Department," he said. He added that the introduction of panel discussions was intended to drive meaningful outcomes rather than simply facilitate dialogue.

"Each discussion must take us somewhere. We must emerge with a clearer understanding of our reality, a frank assessment of what is not working, and agreement on what must change," said Mlokothi. He emphasised that the priorities emerging from the session must find expression in the Department's Annual Performance Plans, Annual Operational Plans and District Programmes of Action, while remaining aligned to the Medium-Term Development Plan, the Provincial Programme of Action and other government priorities. "Our planning must be purposeful, aligned and focused on achieving meaningful impact for the people we serve," he concluded.



MEC Williams and HOD Mr Mlokothi


Mr Dumisani Ndlovu- Acting Director Management Accounting and Mr Gwebindlala


Mr Samora Nerd -Director Human Resource Utilisation and Development and Mr Gwebindlala

NKOSI NGANGOMHLABA MATANZIMA **REMEMBERED AS A MAN OF HONOUR, HUMILITY AND VISIONARY LEADER**

By Vuyani Sibene

The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta) held a memorial lecture in honour of the late Nkosi Ngangomhlaba Matanzima in his hometown of Qamata, Cofimvaba, on 29 September 2026. The memorial lecture provided an important platform to reflect on the values, principles and vision that defined Nkosi Matanzima's contribution to traditional leadership and the communities he served. Leading the programme were MEC for Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture, Sibulele Ngongo, and Member of the Provincial Legislature Mlibo Qoboshiyane. The programme highlighted Nkosi Matanzima's commitment to strengthening traditional leadership institutions and his belief that traditional leaders should embrace education and continuous learning.

Speaking on the purpose of the memorial lecture, CoGTA MEC Zolile Williams said Nkosi Matanzima understood the importance of equipping traditional leaders with the knowledge and skills required to respond effectively to the increasingly complex challenges confronting communities.

“He recognised that traditional leaders needed to be equipped with knowledge and the ability to engage effectively with the complex challenges facing their communities and society. This remains our mandate in the Department, educating traditional leaders in universities across South Africa. His legacy is deeply connected to the history and purpose of the Eastern Cape House of Traditional and Khoisan leaders,” said MEC Williams.

MEC Williams said Nkosi Matanzima firmly believed that the role and contribution of traditional leaders should be properly recognised, including their historical contribution to the struggle for freedom and their continuing responsibility to serve their communities. His contribution towards strengthening the position of traditional leadership as an enduring institution within South Africa's democratic dispensation was also highlighted during the lecture.

Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Prince Zolile Burns-Ncamashe, said Nkosi Matanzima's vision went beyond preserving tradition and sought to ensure that traditional leaders were empowered to participate meaningfully in broader society.

“His vision was not limited to preserving tradition, but also to ensuring that traditional leaders could confidently occupy important spaces, contribute meaningfully to public discourse, and use knowledge and lived experience to influence positive change,” said Deputy Minister Burns-Ncamashe.

Reflecting on his legacy from the perspective of the family, Kumkani Dalimvula Matanzima said Nkosi Matanzima had left an enduring example for those who followed him.

“All of us in the family were walking in his footsteps. His vision recognised traditional leadership as an important backbone of community leadership, with traditional leaders working collaboratively with government and communities to advance development and improve the lives of their people,” said Kumkani Matanzima.

Closing the memorial lecture, Deputy Chairperson of the Provincial House of Traditional and Khoisan Leaders, Nkosi Gwazinamba Matanzima, reflected on some of Nkosi Matanzima's achievements. These included championing the Traditional Initiation Act, facilitating the current building of the Eastern Cape House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders structure, and facilitating the employment and absorption into government of Secretaries of Traditional Authorities. He called for the institution of traditional leadership and the legacy of those who had contributed to its development to be protected.

“We need to protect, with all our hearts and minds, traditional leadership so that it is respected,” said Nkosi Matanzima.

The memorial lecture ultimately served not only as a moment to remember Nkosi Matanzima, but also to reaffirm the values he championed, particularly education, collaboration, service to communities and the strengthening of traditional leadership institutions for future generations. His legacy remains a reminder that traditional leadership can honour its heritage while embracing knowledge, development and meaningful participation in South Africa's democracy.



Nkosi Minenkulu Joyi, Nkosi Xhanti Sigcau, Nkosi Khomotsoana Lebenya and Nkosikazi Simphiwe Mhlambiso



Deputy Minister for Department of Traditional Affairs , Reverend Prince Zolile Burns Ncamashe and Acting Chairperson of the HoTKL , Nkosi Gwazinamba Matanzima



Deputy Minister Nokuzola Capa, Ms Noxolo Kiviet, MEC Williams, Kings Dalimvula Matanzima, Dumelani Sigcau and Luzuko Matiwane

RESTORING DIGNITY AND REVITALISE MVEZO **TRADITIONAL COUNCIL**

By Sabo Dlelengana



Nkosi Mandela, MEC Williams and Mvezo Traditional Leaders with paint materials to renovate the Traditional Council

The Eastern Cape MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), Mr Zolile Williams, visited the Mvezo Traditional Council (MTC) to monitor progress on the renovations underway towards government's commitment to restore the dignity of traditional leadership.

The visit took place on 05 August, a date of historical significance in South Africa's liberation history wherein in 1962, the late former President Nelson Mandela was arrested in his fight against apartheid. The significance of the date was further amplified by the location of the visit in that Mvezo is his birthplace and remains an important symbol of South Africa's liberation history, cultural heritage and the enduring role of traditional leadership.

Addressing traditional leaders and community members, MEC Williams reflected on the sacrifices made by Mandela and other freedom fighters, emphasising that the anniversary of Mandela's arrest serves as a reminder of the responsibility of today's leaders to continue advance the dignity, rights and development of communities.

"Today reminds us of the sacrifices made by the late President Nelson Mandela, who dedicated his life to the struggle for freedom. Our visit is not merely about monitoring a construction project but formed part of a broader commitment to restore and strengthen traditional institutions that remain central to the social, cultural and governance fabric of rural communities. We are here to restore the dignity of the MTC," said MEC Williams.

He added that traditional leadership continues to play an important role in the lives of many communities as custodians of culture and heritage while contributing to social cohesion, community development and cooperative governance.

"We are also committed to resolving the salary matters affecting traditional leaders. I will continue to monitor this project to ensure that the dignity of this institution is fully restored," said MEC Williams.

As part of the visit, the MEC handed over a cow as a symbol of ukuKhahlela and reflected respect for traditional customs and cultural practices while reaffirming the partnership between government and the institution of traditional leadership.

Nkosi Zwelivelile Mandla Mandela welcomed the Department's intervention and expressed appreciation for government's investment in restoration of the MTC.

"This initiative contributes towards preserving the dignity and heritage of an institution located in an area of immense historical significance to South Africa and the world," said Nkosi Mandela

The restoration of the council offices will contribute to creating an environment in which the institution of traditional leadership can continue serving communities while preserving the heritage and legacy associated with Mvezo.

SEDFA TRAINING FOR ALICE YOUTH



The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), through the Traditional Rural Development Facilitation Directorate, facilitated business skills training for youth under the Amagwali Traditional Council in Alice. The training followed a stakeholder engagement where young people identified the need for business opportunities to improve their livelihoods and high unemployment. Following the engagement, the Small Enterprise Development Finance Agency (SEDFA), one of the participating stakeholders, committed to providing business skills training to help youth establish and sustain viable businesses.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AWARENESS TAKEN TO JOE GQABI SCHOOLS

By Vuyani Sibene

The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), through its Disaster Management and Emergency Chief Directorate hosted International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR) build-up awareness campaigns on 13–14 September 2026 in partnership with the Joe Gqabi District Municipality, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, and Santam.

Held at Lehana SSS and Umtha Welanga Senior Secondary School, the campaigns formed part of ongoing efforts to educate learners and communities about disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and the importance of building resilient communities.

Executive Mayor of Joe Gqabi District Municipality, Ms Nomvuyo Mposelwa, emphasised the shared responsibility of government, the private sector and households in reducing disaster risks. She highlighted the importance of risk-informed land-use planning, building standards, access to risk information and effective early-warning systems.

She further stressed the need to address inequalities and ensure communities understand the actions they should take when warnings are issued.

Head of Community Services at Joe Gqabi District Municipality, Councillor Aphiwe Skoti, encouraged learners to become active participants in environmental protection, particularly as changing weather patterns and rising temperatures become increasingly evident.

"As we move towards the summer season, we are already experiencing changing weather patterns and increasing temperatures. This is one of the reasons we are visiting schools to create awareness and encourage learners to play their part in protecting the environment. Planting trees is one of the ways we can build resilience and contribute to a healthier environment," said Councillor Skoti.

The programme also included a practical fire simulation exercise led by Joe Gqabi District Municipality Chief Fire Officer, Mr Benjamin Nxumalo. The demonstration equipped learners with practical knowledge of fire safety and emergency response procedures, while also exposing them to firefighting as a potential career path.

The awareness campaigns concluded with the planting of river bushwillow trees on the school grounds, reinforcing the importance of environmental conservation, climate adaptation and community resilience.



Officials from Joe Gqabi District Municipality and Cogta demonstrating how to put off fire to school children

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PROVINCIAL CELEBRATION ROOTED IN HERITAGE, UNITED IN DIVERSITY AND CELEBRATE CULTURE

By Sabo Dlelengana

The Eastern Cape Provincial Heritage Day Celebrations, held on 24 September 2026 at Kroza Great Place under the Kumkani Mhlontlo Local Municipality, brought together traditional leaders, communities, government representatives and cultural practitioners in a collective celebration of the province's rich and diverse living heritage.

Heritage is an important part of our identity, reflecting our history, values, beliefs, languages, customs and traditions. It connects generations, strengthens a sense of belonging and reminds us of our shared responsibility to preserve our cultural legacy for the future. Through the celebration of our living heritage, communities are encouraged to appreciate their diverse cultural practices while promoting unity, mutual respect and social cohesion.

Speaking at the celebrations, Acting Chairperson of the Eastern Cape House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders, Nkosi Gwazinamba Matanzima, emphasised the importance of respecting, honouring and preserving culture and traditions. He reminded communities that heritage is central to our identity and must be protected and passed on to future generations.

“We must be reminded that heritage is not only a reflection of where we come from, but a foundation that strengthens our identity, unites our communities and inspires future generations to carry our rich cultural legacy forward with pride,” said Nkosi Matanzima.

Delivering the keynote address, Eastern Cape Premier Mr Lubabalo Oscar Mabuyane reaffirmed his commitment to building safer communities and confronting crime. He also commended the South African Police Service (SAPS) for its dedication, courage and continued service in protecting communities.

The messages shared by both leaders highlighted the close connection between cultural preservation, community unity and collective responsibility. While heritage reminds us of our roots and shared identity, safer communities provide an environment in which our cultural practices, traditions and values can continue to thrive.

The celebrations served as a reminder that preserving our living heritage is a shared responsibility that extends beyond a single day. “By honouring our traditions, respecting cultural diversity, strengthening community ties and working together to address societal challenges, we contribute to building a united, safer and stronger Eastern Cape for generations to come,”said Premier Mabuyane.

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Kings Jonguxolo Sandile and Dalimvula Matanzima



Ms Sabo Dlelengana, Principal Communication officer welcoming Premier Mabuyane to Cogta Exhibition Stall



Community members riding horses as part of recreation

GOVERNMENT STRENGTHENS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AHEAD OF 2026 LGE

By Sabo Dlelengana

The Eastern Cape Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) hosted the 7th Provincial Public Participation, Integrated Development Planning and Rapid Response Advisory Forum (PPPIDPRAF) in partnership with the Local Government Communicators Forum (LGCF), at the Chris Hani District Municipality Council Chamber. The two-day engagement brought together key stakeholders to strengthen public participation, improve communication between government and communities, and promote coordinated responses to service delivery matters affecting communities across the province.

The forum convened as an important platform for government and stakeholders to engage on matters affecting communities and to strengthen mechanisms for ensuring that community needs, concerns and priorities are appropriately addressed. This was particularly important as the province prepares for the 2026 Local Government Elections, with stakeholders emphasising the need to maintain effective communication and engagement with communities throughout the election period.

Councillor Thembisile Bobo from the Chris Hani District Municipality emphasised the importance of maintaining clear, consistent and effective communication channels between government and communities, noting that access to accurate information can help prevent misinformation and misunderstandings that may contribute to tensions and protests relating to service delivery. “We need to strengthen the communication lines between government and our communities so that communities receive accurate information and understand the progress being made in addressing service delivery challenges,” said Councillor Bobo.

The first day of the session focused extensively on municipal readiness for the 2026 Local Government Elections, with municipalities from across the province providing updates on their preparedness. Discussions considered a range of issues that could influence the successful conduct of the elections, including voting station connectivity challenges, school infrastructure readiness, temporary voting infrastructure and transport accessibility to voting stations.

The session further provided an opportunity for stakeholders to engage on the 2026/27 Integrated Development Planning (IDP) process in the context of an election year.

Discussions highlighted the importance of maintaining meaningful public participation in municipal planning processes while ensuring continuity in service delivery and responsiveness to community priorities. The IDP remains a critical mechanism through which municipalities identify local needs, determine development priorities and plan interventions, making continued community involvement essential to ensuring that municipal plans are informed by the realities and aspirations of residents.

The second day of the Forum continued with a focus on communication and service delivery, community concerns and preparations for the 2026 Local Government Elections. Communicators engaged on a range of matters affecting communities, including roads, water, electricity and access to identity documents, while also considering election readiness, community support, public perceptions and appropriate responses to service delivery challenges. The discussions provided an opportunity for stakeholders to share progress, identify outstanding challenges and strengthen coordination around practical interventions aimed at addressing matters raised by communities.

Throughout the two-day engagement, the importance of coordinated communication, public participation and rapid response emerged as key components of responsive governance. Stakeholders acknowledged that addressing service delivery challenges requires collaboration among government departments, municipalities, communicators, community structures and other relevant partners. Strengthening these relationships can assist in ensuring that community concerns are identified early, accurate information is communicated effectively, and appropriate interventions are implemented.

The 7th PPPIDPRAF therefore highlighted the importance of maintaining an open and constructive dialogue between government and communities. As the Eastern Cape prepares for the 2026 Local Government Elections, continued engagement with communities, strengthened communication mechanisms and effective coordination will remain critical to building public confidence, promoting accountability and responding effectively to service delivery concerns. The forum reinforced the principle that meaningful public participation is central to responsive local government and that communities must remain at the centre of planning, communication and service delivery efforts across the province.



L-R: Ms Nangamso Ngceke and Dr Sandiso Tyembile Communication Practicioners from Chris Hani District Municipality



Mr Mfundo Nzukuma , Deputy Director Municipal Public Participation

MUNIMEC PUTS SERVICE CONTINUITY AT THE **HEART OF MUNICIPAL TRANSITION**

By Sabo Dlelengana



MEC Zolile Williams

Strengthening municipal stability, accountability and service delivery took centre stage at the second quarter and final MuniMEC meeting for 2026, held from 1–2 September at kuGompo City. The two-day engagement brought together Executive Mayors and Mayors, Municipal Managers, Traditional Leaders and key government stakeholders to address critical governance challenges and strengthen cooperation between provincial and local government.

Opening the session, MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Zolile Williams, emphasised the importance of strengthening municipalities and ensuring that infrastructure maintenance remains a priority. He highlighted that well-maintained infrastructure is essential to sustaining reliable services, protecting public investments and rebuilding public trust in government.

MEC Williams reiterated the need for municipalities to make adequate provision for infrastructure maintenance, including working towards the recommended 8% allocation, while acknowledging that municipalities operate within different financial and operational circumstances.

“We cannot adopt a one size fits all approach. Our interventions must be differentiated and responsive to the different realities facing municipalities,” said MEC Williams.

The meeting also reflected on Section 159 of the Constitution, which provides for the dissolution of a municipal council under prescribed circumstances. Discussions emphasised the importance of ensuring that municipal governance remains functional, accountable and responsive to the needs of communities.

A key focus of the two-day session was leadership continuity, institutional memory and service delivery stability during the 2026 Municipal Transition. Delegates considered the importance of maintaining institutional capacity and ensuring that essential municipal functions continue without disruption during periods of political and administrative change.

The programme further addressed a range of strategic matters affecting local government, including a comprehensive approach to managing migration in South Africa, the Provincial Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (PROVJOINTS) Contingency Plan, and support available to municipalities through the Spaza Shop Fund.

Engagements also focused on the transfer of land parcels to municipalities, an intervention aimed at strengthening municipal planning and institutional capacity while creating opportunities for sustainable development and improved service delivery.

The MuniMEC further reinforced the value of collaboration between provincial government, municipalities, traditional leadership and other stakeholders in addressing complex governance and service delivery challenges.

As the final MuniMEC session for the quarter, the two-day engagement reaffirmed the province's commitment to Cooperative governance, accountable leadership and responsive municipalities. Ultimately, the discussions were centred on one key priority: ensuring that municipal systems, infrastructure and leadership remain focused on the people they serve. By strengthening municipal institutions and improving collaboration across spheres of government, the Eastern Cape continues to work towards municipalities that are stable, capable and better positioned to deliver sustainable services and create better communities. The objective is to ensure that changes in political and administrative leadership are accompanied by a structured handover that protects essential services, institutional memory, public assets and administrative capacity.



L-R: Mayor of Mbashe Local Municipality, Councillor Samkelo Janda , Mayor of Inxuba Yethemba Local Municipality, Councillor Noncedo Zonke and Executive Mayor of Sarah Baartman District municipality, Councillor Deon de Vos

A FAREWELL ETCHED IN MEMORY AND **DEDICATED SERVICE**

By Ziphozethu Sonjica

There are moments in the life of an institution when words seem inadequate to capture the weight of gratitude, the warmth of shared memories and the sadness that accompanies goodbye. Such was the atmosphere at Good News Church in Qonce, where the Traditional Affairs branch hosted a farewell function in honour of Mr Thobela Ndevu, Mrs Nokwanda Mayedwa and Mr Andile Lusizi. It was a day characterised by celebration and nostalgia, as colleagues gathered not simply to mark the conclusion of careers, but to honour people whose presence had become woven into the fabric of the workplace.

Mr Lusizi was remembered as a spiritual, compassionate and selfless colleague whose ability to build relationships extended across organisational units and even to the most challenging stakeholders, including Traditional Leaders and Kings. His passion for his work, coaching ability and readiness to assist wherever a solution was required were repeatedly highlighted.

Mr Ndevu, affectionately remembered for his love of livestock and his diligence in projects relating to it, was celebrated as a dependable and versatile colleague with a strong presence among his peers. His journey from his early days as an intern, when colleagues fondly referred to themselves as “eMzini wezintsizwa,” to his years in Traditional Affairs reflected a career characterised by commitment, respect for authority and an unwavering willingness to work under demanding schedules.

Meanwhile Mrs Mayedwa, was remembered with warmth as a gentle, humble and soft-spoken colleague who carried herself with grace. Often reserved and always smiling, she was described as someone who loved people and contributed to a welcoming and harmonious working environment. Her quiet strength and kindness left an impression that did not require a loud voice to be felt.

In a gesture that transformed appreciation into something tangible, Mr Lusizi and Mr Ndevu were gifted with livestock by their colleagues, symbolising respect, generosity and the enduring bonds forged through years of service. The atmosphere then shifted from reflection to celebration as the institution's Chief Director for Traditional Institutional Governance, Mr Malibongwe Ngcai took to the saxophone, delivering a beautiful musical performance that brought smiles, laughter and renewed energy to the gathering.

Representatives of the National Education Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU) also joined colleagues in bidding farewell. As one tribute poignantly captured the sentiment: “You have left a big void. The office releases you with a warm heart.”

As they step into retirement, the Traditional Affairs Branch extends its sincere appreciation to Mr Ndevu, Mrs Mayedwa and Mr Lusizi for their dedicated service and wishes them a fulfilling, peaceful and prosperous journey into the next chapter of their lives.



Mr Sixolile Nongauza



Mr Malibongwe Ngcai- Chief Director Traditional Institutional Governance



L-R: Mr Thobela Ndevu, Ms Nokwanda Mayedwa and Mr Andile Lusizi



Ms Ncebakazi Jaceni, Director Traditional Financial Management



Officials from the Traditional Affairs Branch

HOUSE OF TRADITIONAL AND KHOISAN **LEADERS HOSTS TWO-DAY SITTING**

By Anelisa Mabece

The Eastern Cape House of Traditional and Khoisan leaders (ECHoTKL) convened a two-day comprehensive sitting as part of the Sixth Term of the House, bringing together key institutions to share information on matters affecting traditional leaders, communities and public office bearers.

The session included presentations by the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC), Disaster Management and Mitigation Services, the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS), and the South African Revenue Service (SARS).

The IEC, represented by Commissioner Glen Mashinini, provided an overview of electoral readiness for the upcoming 2026 Local Government Elections. He highlighted an increase in registered voters in the EC, from approximately 3.4 million in 2024 to 3.6 million in 2026 and the voter registration initiatives that have contributed more than 60,000 new voters.

Mr Mashinini said its voter education and outreach programmes conducted in schools, churches and community gatherings, emphasising the important role of traditional authorities in strengthening public awareness, civic participation and democratic processes. Challenges relating to infrastructure and communication systems were also discussed.

Ms Chuleza, Chief Director in the Provincial Disaster Management and Emergency Services said the province is faced with disaster risks and needed strategies to strengthen preparedness and mitigation. She emphasised the critical role traditional leaders can play by supporting early warning systems, public education and effective communication during emergencies.

Among the key mitigation strategies highlighted were improved early warning systems, disaster preparedness, stronger stakeholder coordination, enhanced communication, the use of technology and data, and adequate funding and resources. The SANSA project was also highlighted, which uses satellite imagery to map hazards and support disaster planning and response. High-risk areas for flooding include parts of the OR Tambo and Alfred Nzo districts.

The House also received a presentation from GEMS Eastern Cape Team Leader Ms. Nisiphe Mzukwa, who outlined the various medical aid options available to members. including entry-level, network and more comprehensive plans, while emphasising the importance of selecting a medical aid option according to individual needs and making use of designated networks.

The South African Revenue Services (SARS) representative Mr. Qhamani Mjali addressed tax obligations, with particular focus on travel allowances. He explained the distinction between fixed travel allowances and reimbursed business travel, as well as the importance of maintaining accurate travel records and logbooks.

Members were encouraged to make use of SARS digital platforms, including eFiling, to monitor their tax affairs, meet filing obligations and remain compliant. The importance of maintaining accurate records and submitting information on time was also emphasised.

The Acting Chairperson of the HoTKL Nkosi Gwazinamba Matanzima, welcomed the presentations and acknowledged the value of the information shared with Members of the House.

He emphasised the importance of continuing with the information-sharing sessions to empower traditional leaders while ensuring that information is communicated to communities. The sitting reinforced the importance of collaboration between the House, government institutions and communities to promote informed participation, disaster preparedness, good governance and improved access to essential services.



Ms Chuleza Jama- Chief Director Disaster Management and Emergency Services



Members of the House critically engaging with the presentations



Mr Glen Mashinini- Commissioner of Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)

ACCELERATING BETTER SERVICES FOR EASTERN CAPE COMMUNITIES

By Sabo Dlelengana



HOD Mlokothi



L-R: Mr Ayanda Makhanya- Director Spatial Planing Services and Mr Luthando Plaatjie - Chief Director Municipal Basic and Development Services

The Eastern Cape Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) advanced efforts to improve government project implementation through the Provincial District Development Model (DDM) Technical Hub Inception Meeting held in Chintsa on 22 September 2026.

The meeting brought together provincial stakeholders and technical experts responsible for Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) projects to identify implementation challenges, find practical solutions and improve the delivery of government programmes.

Opening the engagement, Cogta Head of Department, Mr Vuyo Mlokothi emphasised the importance of collective action and accountability in ensuring that government projects progress effectively from planning to implementation.

“We must strengthen our collective efforts to ensure that the challenges affecting project delivery are identified and addressed early. Through an integrated and multidisciplinary approach, we can improve coordination, unblock delays and ensure that government projects move from planning to implementation and ultimately deliver meaningful services to our communities,” said Mr Mlokothi.

The Technical Hub will serve as a structured coordination and problem-solving mechanism through which provincial, district and local government stakeholders can work from a shared understanding of projects and their implementation requirements. Rather than government institutions addressing challenges in isolation, the Hub brings the relevant stakeholders and technical expertise together to assess projects collectively and determine the interventions required to keep implementation on track.

A key function of the Hub will be to facilitate information sharing and joint project reviews. Stakeholders can consider project objectives, implementation plans, budgets, timelines, progress and outstanding activities, while identifying areas where the actions of one institution depend on those of another. This creates a common view of project performance and enables stakeholders to identify emerging challenges before they result in prolonged delays.

The Hub will also provide a platform for joint planning and multidisciplinary engagement. Technical officials and relevant government stakeholders can assess projects from different perspectives, including planning, infrastructure, finance, procurement and intergovernmental relations. This integrated approach allows implementation challenges to be considered collectively and helps ensure that interventions are aligned across the three spheres of government.

Where bottlenecks are identified, the Hub will support coordinated problem-solving and escalation. Issues such as procurement delays, technical constraints, funding challenges, approval processes, capacity limitations or dependencies on other government interventions can be examined to determine their causes and the appropriate response. Where an issue cannot be resolved at local level, it can be escalated to the relevant district or provincial structure for further intervention.

The process also strengthens accountability by helping stakeholders clarify who is responsible for particular actions, what needs to be done and what follow-up is required. Subsequent project reviews can then assess whether agreed interventions have been implemented, whether bottlenecks have been removed and whether further support or escalation is necessary.

In this way, the Technical Hub creates a continuous link between planning, implementation, problem-solving and monitoring. It supports the DDM objective of promoting more integrated planning and cooperation between the three spheres of government, while ensuring that provincial interventions are better aligned with district and local priorities.

Through the DDM, stakeholders will work together to address barriers to implementation, improve the quality of government interventions and accelerate projects that have a direct impact on communities. The ultimate measure of successful project implementation is whether communities experience real improvements in their daily lives through better access to services, improved infrastructure, responsive government programmes and faster attention to local challenges. The Technical Hub therefore seeks to help turn government plans into visible results on the ground, ensuring that development reaches the communities that need it most and creates lasting improvements in their quality of life.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND FIRE SERVICES HEADS UNITE FOR COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

By Vuyani Sibene





L-R:Mr Lefa Mothupi, Manager National Disaster Centre Fire Services, Mr Roland Hendricks, Director NDMC Fire Services, Ms Chuleza Hombisa Jama, Chief Director Disaster Management and Emergency Services, Mr Jappie Lengoabala, Manager NDMC Fire Services, Mr Siphiwo Maqungo, Director Legal Services and Mr Nilton Whiteboy, Chief Fire Officer Nelson Mandela Metro.

A first-of-its-kind Strategic Planning Session, Heads of Disaster Management Centres and Fire Services Chiefs convened by COGTA on 20 August 2026 at the Gqeberha Disaster Management Centre (DMC) under the theme "Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance and Integrated Fire Management: Advancing Early Action in Disaster Management Towards Community Resilience." The session brought together key stakeholders to strengthen disaster preparedness, governance, and coordinated fire services management across the province.

Opening the session Ms Chuleza Jama, Head of the Provincial Disaster Management Centre (PDMC), emphasised the importance of agility and effective early-warning systems, particularly in remote areas such as Tsolo, Sterkspruit and Engcobo.

"Our main focus is to promote disaster management and fire services through planning, budgeting and monitoring. I am very pleased with the progress demonstrated by the BCM through the newly built fire station in Ntabozuko, formerly Berlin. Let us engage freely and emerge with an early-warning strategy to assist our communities during disaster sitautions," said Ms Jama.

In her presentation, Ms Malerata Macheli, Director for Policy Development, Institutional Structures and Compliance Management, called for the endorsement of the Disaster Risk Management Project to be implemented by the National Disaster Management Centre under the Medium-Term Development Plan. "The Disaster Management Act of 2002 provides the legislative framework for an integrated and coordinated approach to disaster management across all spheres of government. Let us work together for preparedness, reduce disaster risks, and strengthen early-warning systems that lead to early decision-making and early action," she said.

On fire services reform, Mr Roland Hendricks, Director for Fire Services, highlighted the significance of the 2030 Fire Services Strategic Roadmap. "The roadmap seeks to position the Eastern Cape within the National Fire Services Reform Programme and guide provincial action on governance, institutional capacity, implementation, and municipal powers and functions.

We are addressing the systemic weaknesses that prevent fire services from operating as a coherent, adequately funded, professionally capable, and accountable national system," Hendricks explained. Ms Samnkele Dandala (designation) spoke on Disaster Risk Assessment and Early-Warning Systems and stressed the importance of Early Warning Coordination, geospatial intelligence, risk-information management, preparedness, and early action.

"Early warning is a statutory duty, but early action is what makes it count. The mandate, tools and projects are in place. What remains is shared ownership at every level, including at the grassroots level. We must continue to inform the public and our communities to ensure greater resilience," she said.

The strategic meeting, was also an opportunity to share best practices and success stories in disaster management and fire services, highlighting innovative approaches to emergency preparedness and response.

The session closed with key resolutions, which included strengthening the Drone Unit Support Programme through improved reporting, maintenance and connectivity, enhance collaboration, capacity building and technology-driven solutions, advocate for increased funding for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programmes, incorporate disaster management training into SALGA induction programmes for newly elected councillors as well as and promote a coordinated and integrated approach to disaster risk management, response, recovery and community resilience.



L-R: Mr Shaun Faltein Chief Fire Officer Amathole DM, Ms Bongisa Noxeke, Divisional Commander BCM, Mr John Alexander, PDMC Deputy Director Fire Brigade Services, Mr Benjamin Nxumalo, Chief Fire Officer for Joe Gqabi and Mr Jonguxolo Mokweni, Manager Fire Services NMB