



GAUTENG PROVINCE

ROADS AND TRANSPORT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH

MEETING WITH GAUTENG DRIVING SCHOOLS ASSOCIATIONS

“DRIVING SCHOOLS – PUTTING ROAD SAFETY FIRST”

The driving school industry provides an important service to our society. It is a business whose service product or value proposition has a direct bearing on the safety of all other users of our roads.

Over the years, it has become much more evident that the key to road safety is responsible driver behaviour. A well-trained driver, who has the necessary driving skills to handle his/her vehicle responsibly and with courtesy and due consideration to other road users, is an asset to our society. S/he is a key element in the implementation of our road safety strategy.

The converse means that a bad driver is a serious liability to our social order. The sad reality is that the majority of young South African drivers are not fully conscious of their responsibilities on the roads. In March this year, Goodyear published the results of an international survey, which showed that South African drivers between the ages of 18 – 25 years were among the most reckless drivers.

Vehicle manufacturing companies have built and continue to build more and more safety features into motorised transport. But they also have made cars to go faster. In spite of the advancement of modern transport vehicles, together with an improved road network, the most critical element in the entire equation of safer roads is the driver behind

the wheel. Therefore, the actual role of the driving schools in ensuring that the drivers that they prepare to be licensed by us continue to be the determining factor in making our road network safer for all concerned.

When one looks at the driving schools in the bigger scheme of motorised transport and mobility, we realize that much more should have been done to regulate those who provide this important service. The driving schools should have been regulated and professionalised much sooner. Proper regulation and registration of driving schools would have added to their commercial success. But, it's never too late to do the right thing. It is never too late to correct a situation. We need to work together to fast track developments so that we could bridge the gaps that exist. We must be clear where the industry is, and where it should be in terms of its business case, and set norms and standards for entry to operate.

We have heard the concerns of the driving school industry as articulated to both us as well as the Gauteng Provincial Legislature. This meeting here today is the start of a process to address your concerns in partnership with you. Both the industry stakeholders and the Gauteng Department of Roads and Transport need to take responsibility for the areas that need fixing.

On our part we want to work together with you to ensure that the DLTCs are conducive for you to conduct your business in a professionalised manner and that all DLTCs provide the professionalism; courtesy; ease of business in terms of corporate governance; and ethical norms and standards, without fear, favour or prejudice. And we have to work hard together to clear the backlog of

learner drivers waiting for bookings or slots to be tested for their drivers' licenses. This, we must do, on an ethical basis.

I have said this before, and I would like to repeat it here today, If you have any information to the effect that any of my officials at any of the DLTCs are involved or you suspect of being involved in corrupt or unethical practices, I want you to provide me with the names of such person/s for me to take the appropriate action. Corruption practices at DLTCs are not only harmful to your business, but it brings the entire licensing regime and all of us active in this value chain into disrepute. The driving schools have been left unregulated for too long now. The National Department of Transport has drafted amendments, and the accompanying regulations, to the National Road Traffic Act (2009). This move is welcomed by the Gauteng Department of Roads and Transport. We are hopeful that these measures will be processed by parliament in the current term.

However, we thought that while we wait for that formal process to be completed, we should voluntarily and proactively take the initiative to create some regulatory framework within which we all do our work. This will also help with establishing compliant behaviour before the regulations come into effect.

In the interim, we propose the following interventions.

The Department will embark on a consultation process to discuss a draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with driving schools. The purpose of the MOA is to provide an interim framework of voluntary registration of driving schools. The MOA will remain in operation in

Gauteng until such time as the amendments to the National Road Traffic Act are enacted and the regulations promulgated.

Some of the elements of the MOA are:

- Provisional Registration/Certification of Driving Schools - Driving schools that comply with certain requirements will be provisionally certificated. We will also extend the certification to the instructors.
- The driving schools will have to agree to some form of inspections. At the moment an annual inspection linked to a renewal of a certificate is proposed.
- The requirements for an instructor are also spelt out in the MOA; these include that the instructor must have attended a Department approved training programme. An instructor must be issued with an operator card, which s/he must display at all time while training.
- A driving school or instructor certificate may be revoked if the entity concerned violates the NRTA.

A Provincial Driving School Forum will be established after the consultation process is completed. Only the associations that sign the MOA will be allowed to join the Forum. The Forum will provide a platform for interaction and engagement between MEC and the Associations where matters of mutual interest will be discussed.

The Department is cognisant of the fact that much more needs to be done to normalise the situation. We must set stricter controls for officials and examiners. In this regard we are embarking on a process to ensure that we train a new corps of examiners. We will conduct regular audits and security checks.

A major intervention is the creation of an Inspectorate within the Department to monitor compliance within the DLTCs. The Inspectorate will do random checks and report suspected cases of fraud to the Department of Community Safety for investigation.

We are committed to forging a closer working relationship and partnership with the driving school industry. With the establishment of the Driving School Forum at the end of the consultation process, we will have a platform to engage with the driving schools. We look forward to getting your comments and sincerely hope that you will take up membership of the Forum by agreeing to sign the proposed MOA.

Ismail Vadi

MEC for Roads and Transport

6 AUGUST 2013