



SPEECH

SPEECH BY MEC ISMAIL VADI AT THE DISABILITIES AND DRIVING CAMPAIGN WORKSHOP, 13 FEBRUARY 2018

Thank you for the invitation to participate in this important workshop on Disabilities and Driving Campaign.

For me it is not so much about delivering a speech as it is about learning of the real challenges that people with disabilities experience daily in their lives.

Driving a car - something that most of us take for granted once we get a driver's license – is not that easy if one survives a horrific car crash and is left physically disabled.

Even if the mind knows what to do, the hands or the legs might not be able to do it. How does one overcome this sort of disability and continue to lead a fulfilling and active life?

That's the kind of thing we have to address. So, thank you for inviting me today to learn about the daily challenges of life of people living with disabilities. In our country and in communities, persons with disabilities and their families continue to experience high levels of marginalisation, exclusion and I dare say discrimination, despite a relatively enabling and protective policy and legislative environment.

Addressing the rights and development needs of persons with disabilities remain the responsibility of a few designated with this responsibility, whilst the mainstream of planners, designers, managers and researchers continue with implementation of their programmes to the general population, leaving those who require universal design and reasonable support measures behind.

What is missing are carefully considered catalytic interventions. What is sorely needed are practical interventions that will embed disability inclusion in government planning and every day community life.

Many people living with physical disabilities are socially isolated and dependent on family and friends for transport.

Most able bodied persons are oblivious to their needs and are completely unaware of the cost of being disabled.

A suitably adapted vehicle can give back independence and freedom to a person living with a disability. In many cases it opens up the possibility of being employed again and living a 'normal' life.

However, finding out about suitable vehicles and adaptations can be a daunting challenge as each person has different needs, different abilities and different requirements. They often do not know where to start.

The national Drive and Thrive Initiative is an important starting point for all of us. It aims to:

- Assist people with physical disabilities to source suitable vehicles according to their individual needs.
- Provide information regarding the different adaptations available to enable them to choose the adaptations that will be best suited to their disability and which will optimise their driving ability.
- Provide information regarding driving schools that can accommodate drivers with disabilities.
- Educate the motor dealers about the needs of drivers with disabilities with regards to vehicle choices, adaptations available and the rebate procedures, as well as encourage the use of temporary hand controls at their various branches in order to enable people with disabilities to test- drive new vehicles.
- Create public awareness around the needs of drivers with disabilities, with particular emphasis on the purpose of Disabled Parking Bays as well as being sensitive to them on roads.
- Create public awareness around the consequences of the poor standards of driving on South African roads and the impact that crashes have on individuals who have become disabled through road accidents.

May I invite you to work with the Gauteng Department of Roads and Transport/Department of Transport to develop an implementable licensing system for drivers with physical disabilities.

We should be training more licensing examiners who are familiar with the specific needs of people with disabilities.

We must develop SABS standards for adapted vehicles. Also, we need more thorough-going research on “driving with a disability” in South Africa and we should be collecting crash statistics on drivers with disabilities.

I am sure there are many more aspects that should warrant our attention such as adequate public transport services and transport infrastructure that cater for the needs of people with disabilities.

I really would like to see a Working Group being established that will engage our Department on all the policy and programmatic that need our attention.

There's a great deal of work that needs to be done in this area. In essence, if we are to be the “smart province” that Gauteng claims to be, we should be able to provide an information platform for lifestyle services that accommodate people with disabilities so that they can lead full and active lives.

Ends!!!

For more information, please contact the Department of Roads and Transport Media Liaison Officer on 073 644 9935 or PressOffice.gpdr@ga.gov.za