



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Speech delivered by the Deputy Minister of Tourism at the Buddies Project Launch in Limpopo

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Programme Director, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen and especially the selected graduate students of the National Department of Tourism's Safety monitors, Tourism ambassadors and young chef's hospitality programmes.

Distinguished guests, thanks so much for taking time out of your busy lives to celebrate with us the launch of the Tourism Buddies Programme of the Department's Social Responsibility Implementation Skills Development programmes, we will make every effort to keep it short and sweet.

As I was thinking of what to say to you all today, I realised that by implementing a government programme like this it is a lot like creating a good, strong marriage: it takes much longer than you can imagine; it takes a lot of hard work that nobody tells you about --- and the results are far more satisfying than as we experienced from the results of the current and past programmes, as learners who complete the programme successfully will walk away with accredited national qualifications in Food and Beverage an Accommodation Services. In this regard I wish to single out the current students from the Department's National Young Chef programme who is providing the catering for this event. I think they have excelled themselves in this regard.

But, to understand just how profound a role the hospitality industry plays in the tourism economy and our lives, a myth must be dispelled: The hospitality industry is more than the high school student at the counter of a fast-food restaurant, the cleaning staff at an area hotel and the ticket-taker at a park.

It is true, as in any type of business that the hospitality industry has some low-wage positions, but it also has a large number of highly paid, skilled positions filled by dedicated professionals who contribute to the growth of the communities in which they live. This can be witnessed from the success stories from our previous programmes where students went on to establish their own businesses or were employed by the major hotel chains nationally and internationally.

Consider the fine chef who makes you a meal you remember for years to come. Or the travel consultant who arranged all of the details for your honeymoon. Or the hotel manager who ensured your stay at her place of business was an unforgettable experience some of these are graduates from our programme.

How many business deals have been closed across the table in an upscale restaurant? How many out-of-town guests have done business staying at our hotels or bed and breakfasts? The hospitality industry plays a significant, supporting role in these business dealings. Companies in the industry help enable others to do business.

Additionally, the hospitality industry spawns new enterprise itself. Consider the vendors that provide the meat, vegetables and wine to local restaurants. And what about the technology advances for the hospitality industry? Consider the new computer systems designed to track inventory, keep customers' accounts and communicate with credit card companies. Consider the tremendous amount of audio-visual technology used in the hospitality industry. Consider the projection systems, lighting and sound systems used in each performance or high-tech business meeting.

All of these services contribute to the growth of the economy and spark new products and companies.

The Tourism Buddies programme that we are launching today will benefit 500 learners from the Capricorn, Mopani, Vhembe, Waterberg and Sekhukhune District Municipalities. Once their theoretical training is complete they will be placed with selected host employers for in-service training. Perhaps the most important outcome of these efforts is how they can help keep young people in our region who, instead of looking for the things they find important in a quality life elsewhere, will discover what they are looking for right here.

Like all large projects such as this, the Department of Tourism has had its challenges. And one of the things I learned most about working in community projects is how many of the people we worked with in all levels of government and the hospitality industry were personally interested and personally invested in making our programme a success. It was clear that each of them knew very well that 'time is money' and did their utmost to make certain that we were ready for this launch day. I will always remember their willingness to go the extra mile on our behalf. That kind of dedication, for me, is truly inspiring and makes me glad to be part of this project.

If I may I would like to single out the following:

We are grateful for the Department in appointing Bonwelong Skills Development as the training implementer for the project in Limpopo.

The department is also working closely with the Provincial Department of Tourism (LEDET) in making sure that the project becomes a success. LEDET is assisting the department with identification of local stakeholders and host employer engagement in terms of learner placement.

The Local Municipalities are also actively involved in the project and they are responsible for assisting the department with identification of venues for training and for Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings. They also assist with the recruitment and interviews towards learner selection. The local Municipalities also assist with identification of relevant host employers within their respective municipalities and placement of learners of which 120 host employers will be involved in the project and I acknowledge the presence of those here today.

We have so much to be proud of. The hospitality industry is achieving fantastic things and I would like to thank all of you in this room for the work you do to keep our South African and Limpopo destinations as attractive and compelling as they have ever been. We are all aware of how competitive the world has become when it comes to attracting visitors, so we know we must keep raising our game. It is only by ensuring that we have high standards and proper training of our young people, and in doing that, that we can be certain of our continued success.

I thank you

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