

## Opening of the Child Safety Centre

05 April 2011

Speech by the Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, Clr Amos Masondo, on the occasion of the opening of the Child Safety Centre, Randburg – Johannesburg

Programme Director

MMC for Public Safety: Clr Elginah Ndhlovu

Members of the Mayoral Committee

Fellow Councillors

City Manager: Mr Mavela Dlamini

Managers and Officials of the City

Sponsors, Representative from Syntell, Mr Mark Chewins

Distinguished Guests

The Community of the Greater Randburg area

The Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Programme Director, it is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to share this day with you and to be part of this very important event – the launch of the Child Safety Centre.

Traffic safety is one of the key priorities of the City of Johannesburg. To realise such a goal requires the building of a strong partnership with all spheres of government, organisations of civil society as well as all local communities. The role of business in this regard cannot be overemphasised.

Programme Director, people in the field of education agree that behaviour patterns that are taught during the early years of a child's development, tends later, to become a dominant feature of ones adult life. This is true for a good habit as well as, unfortunately, equally so, for bad habits.

We are committed to teaching road safety and responsible behaviour especially to the youth. We do so, with the expectation that nurturing a responsible child may one day yield a responsible adult.

Programme Director, this Safety Centre has been developed as a result of a partnership between the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department and Syntell. It is designed in such a way that its programmes are meant to teach children from a very early age about the rules of the road. These programmes are constituted of basic steps that teaches about safety and seeks to ensure the prevention of accidents.

Those of you who have had an opportunity to walk around the centre may have noticed that we have introduced a few mini-versions of basic road markings signs to help our children become familiar with the real world, in a manner that is fairly informal and playful. In this way learning is made more interesting and entertaining.

In the City's Public Safety Plan we have introduced a number of measures to promote basic safety and reduce the number of accidents on our roads. I am pleased to report that we have been able to realise a number of successes:

- Through Operation Thiba we have observed a significant reduction in the number of accidents, serious injuries and fatalities (on our roads);
- We have observed a steady rise in levels of awareness (annual reduced fatalities);
- Police visibility;
- By-law enforcement; and
- Municipal courts in place (room for improvement).

Programme Director, however, whilst much has been done, we can never ever sit back and claim that we have arrived. We can never sit back and relax. There is much much more that has to be done. One only has to read the weekend papers to realise the extent of horrific accidents and the resultant deaths.

Statistics show that excessive speed remains the single biggest cause of accidents on our roads. If you add to the speeding, the problems of alcohol and substance abuse and the presence of unroadworthy vehicles - you get a toxic mix that inevitably leads to carnage that is being experienced on our roads.

The sad reality is that the vast majority of these accidents can be prevented if the basic rules of the road are being followed.

I would like to give you the assurance today that the City of Johannesburg will not relent on its proactive measures to act against speeding offenders. We will continue to do this through the use of speed traps on carefully selected roads. We will use whatever advanced and modern technology to catch offenders and ensure that they are effectively prosecuted.

Those caught speeding will be dealt with to the fullest extent of the law. Actions will be taken to curb a whole range of offences including drunk driving, overloaded vehicles and all similar transgressions.

This month, the country will again celebrate a number of national days including the Easter weekend. This period has unfortunately, over the years, become associated with high traffic volumes and sharp spikes in accidents, injuries and deaths.

Road safety management – and especially action against speedsters – is not popular amongst members of the public anywhere else in the world. In this City we are well prepared and have braced ourselves for the usual barrage of criticism. We know that the overwhelming majority of law-abiding residents of Johannesburg support our efforts and expect JMPD to step up the pace.

We all need to salute those who have chosen to serve in the JMPD. We should be grateful that those who are committed and dedicated and who do their work with diligence are by far in the majority. Their effort at fighting corruption is second to none.

If we are to build more united, non-racial, integrated and safer communities, we need to lift the bar and take this initiative to a higher level.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate Syntell, our partners in this project. I also wish to express the hope that we are looking forward to other companies following in their footsteps and becoming responsible corporate citizens.

Programme Director, I trust that what is taught here, and the experiences that will get accumulated, will fundamentally alter behaviour and improve the quality of life of all our people for generations to come.

Together we can build better communities.

Thank you