

## Opening of the Drug Rehabilitation 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 Drug Rehabilitation Centre, Randburg – Johannesburg

Programme Director

MMC for Community Development: Clr Bafana Sithole

Members of the Mayoral Committee

Fellow Councillors

City Manager: Mr Mavela Dlamini

Managers and Officials

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 opening of the Drug Rehabilitation Centre. This Rehabilitation Centre is a partnership between the City of Johannesburg and the South African National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence (SANCA).

What is drug abuse? And how big is the problem?

Drug abuse refers to the "deliberate use of an illegal drug or of too much (use) of a prescribed drug".

Many people still believe that drug abuse in South Africa is not as wide spread (as prolific) as it is (the case) around the world. As far back as 2007, the then Minister of Social Development, Dr Zola Skweyiya, indicated that South Africa had "more than 235 000 problem drug users who cost the economy more than R10 billion a year...that up to 12 million family members of drug users were left facing financial difficulties".

As a City we are deeply aware of the growing problem of substance abuse, especially by young people. In recent weeks we have unfortunately seen numerous media reports on the extent of drug abuse amongst school children which led to police raids on some of the schools.

This problem manifests itself in many ways:

- Teenagers begin to succumb to peer pressure to experiment with drugs at a young age.
- Drug dealers sell drugs to vulnerable groups such as children and minors.
- HIV and AIDS is often transmitted via sharing of needles and drug abuse; and
- Getting young girls addicted to heroine and using them as prostitutes.

Programme Director, drug abuse affects the entire spectrum of our society – from our very affluent communities to the poorest of the poor. Amongst the most commonly drugs used by youth in Johannesburg are the following: dagga, cocaine, nyaope, crack, codeine, ecstasy, heroin and mandrax. This extends to medicines and alcohol. The most abused are pain relievers, tranquilisers, cough mixtures and slimming tablets. Alcohol abuse is widespread.

Programme Director, also included amongst these, are household substances such as glue, spray cans, benzene and petrol fumes which can be extremely harmful to our health and, as was proven in a recent case, this led to a sudden death of a young school girl.

What is our response?

Our response has ranged from legislation such as The Prevention and Treatment of Substance Abuse Bill to establishment of rehabilitation centres, substance abuse summits, request for religious and similar institutions to intervene, campaigns led by individuals affected e.g. families to Local Action Committees consisting of social workers, teachers, police officials and local community members.

To counter the scourge of drugs used in our City, the Council in June 2010, approved the establishment of a drug rehabilitation centre model where we can participate with NGOs that are specialists in this field.

There are a number of privately run drug rehabilitation institutions in our City that perform excellent work for which they should be congratulated. However, many of these institutions are not accessible to young people struggling with drug dependence. These young people and their families are often without the financial means required to pay for expensive and lengthy treatment programmes or interventions.

The City has sought (a solution) to, amongst others, do the following:

- To establish a Drug Rehabilitation Centre;
- Provide the infrastructure; and
- Partner with a capable NGO that would provide the management expertise and take responsibility for the rehabilitation programmes.

Programme Director, following a process to evaluate proposals, our choice fell on SANCA as a natural partner in this project. SANCA has been working in the field of alcohol and drug addiction since 1956 and has established 32 linked societies in all nine provinces to provide treatment and advice to dependents and their families.

It has established a wonderful reputation for the quality of its work and the successes it is achieving not only in the field of rehabilitation but also in prevention and education programmes. SANCA facilities in Johannesburg such as Phoenix House, Soweto, Central Rand, Fordsburg, Auckland Park and many more have set the standards against which successful rehabilitation and treatment programmes are being measured.

For this reason we are proud to be associated with SANCA in the establishment of this facility in Randburg which will serve communities in the western parts of Johannesburg. This centre will provide the following:

- Treatment;
- Rehabilitation; and
- After-care services.

It will also be responsible for:

- Outreach,

- Advice; and
- Counselling – especially to the youth of our City.

Equally important these programmes will also provide support to families of addicts to enable them to cope with the effects of addiction and often disastrous impact on family life and interpersonal relationships.

These services will support our own City of Joburg's Youth Development Strategy which includes health promotion and positive interventions to reach young people involved in drugs or at risk of being drawn into the lifestyle.

In addition, Programme Director, Johannesburg also supports the national government's "Ke Moja" Campaign that uses awareness drives and public education to motivate young people to refrain from drug abuse. Through the City's Youth Unit we are involved in programmes using sports as a medium to reach out to young people.

We are also working closely with law enforcement officials from the South African Police Service and JMPD in preventative actions in alignment with the objectives of the National Drug Master Plan.

One of the important future steps will be the setting up of Local Drug Action Committees (LDACs) within communities that will ensure a collective approach by all stakeholders to identify people at risk, prevent drug-related crime, provide access to treatment and rehabilitation and ensure quality of life for all our residents.

Programme Director, let me take this opportunity to congratulate MMC for Community Development Clr Bafana Sithole, the Executive Director for Community Development Pilisiwe Twala-Tau, as well as the entire management team and staff in the department, for bringing this noble facility to the doorstep of local residents and citizens.

Let me also, please let me take this opportunity to commend all the participants who have played a key role in the establishment of this facility.  
Let us work together, through this initiative, build better communities.

Thank you