

STERN WARNING TO TOUTS AND CORRUPT LAYWERS

Newly appointed Transport Minister Ms Dipuo Peters used the 'RAF on the Road' outreach campaign in Welkom as a platform to send a stern warning to unscrupulous attorneys and "tsotsi" touters that their days of robbing victims of motor vehicle accidents are coming to an end.

Minister Peters, who took over the Transport portfolio in early July, told numerous stakeholders, including high-ranking national, provincial and local government officials, taxi bosses, RAF Executives, and hundreds of community members who packed the Thabong Community Hall in Thabong in Welkom, that she would be consulting relevant Government Ministers to help tackle problems caused by corrupt attorneys and touters, whom she described as "tsotsis".

"I'm going to talk to the Minister of Health (Aaron Motsoaledi) to deal with touters at hospitals. South Africa should not be turned into a haven for criminality, especially in our hospitals," said Peters adding that the culture of touters operating freely like vultures at hospitals where they wait for ambulances carrying victims of motor vehicle accidents should come to an end.

She urged victims of motor vehicle accidents to be careful when approached by people who promise to help them claim from the Road Accident Fund



Transport Minister Ms Dipuo Peters

(RAF) and not sign documents they don't understand. She said it was saddening to hear that there are instances where the RAF will settle a claim for R1, 4 million with only R200 000 given to a claimant and the rest being pocketed by attorneys.

I'm going to engage stakeholders to help stop fraud, touters and ensure the arrest of lawyers who steal. Even it means these lawyers losing their ability to practice by striking them off the roll, so be it," she added.

The event was also attended by CEO Dr Eugene Watson, RAF Executives, General and Senior Managers. Dr Watson said the RAF was commit-



ted to making a difference in the lives of victims of motor vehicle accidents. "Through the pain and suffering, we have the RAF which addresses loss of income, pain and suffering and medical care. In the last 24 months, we have been making changes and are now going to communities instead of them coming to us," said Watson.

To date, the 'RAF on the Road' outreach programme has seen the RAF taking its services to the doorsteps of 20 communities across the country assisting thousands of victims of road accident and their dependants. The programme has also seen over R120 million worth of claims being settled at the events to those who claim directly from the RAF.

South African Taxi Council General Secretary, Philip Taaibosch, said his organisation was "fully" behind victims claiming directly from the RAF.

His sentiments were shared by the parents of a 14-year-old girl who received R1,2 million compensation for their daughter who lost an eye after a motor vehicle accident in 2009. The young girl was with her grandmother when their vehicle crashed into a tree leaving the then ten-year-old with facial injuries which left her with one eye. "We don't regret claiming directly

with the RAF and we will tell others that the process is relatively easy. I was advised by my brother-in-law who is a lawyer to claim directly. I'm very happy I claimed directly," said the father. He added that it was still difficult for the family to accept that their daughter had one glass eye and could not see clearly with the other.

Ms Jafta, who heads the 'RAF on the Road' programme, said the organisation will continue taking its services to needy communities. "We've already taken our services to the doorsteps of communities in all our provinces since we launched this programme early last year, and more visits are in the pipeline. During August, we will visit Mafikeng in the North West (17 August) and we will also be taking our services to Mt Frere in the Eastern Cape on 31 August."

"We are also in the process of increasing our footprint throughout the country by establishing regional offices where we've never had them before. We're looking at new ways of ensuring that we fulfil our mandate and deliver a service that makes a difference in the lives of those directly or indirectly affected by motor vehicle accidents," concluded Jafta.