



agriculture & rural development

Department:
agriculture
& rural development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

KZN Department of Agriculture & Rural Development
Private Bag X9059, Pietermaritzburg, 3200

Enquiries: Nalini Dickson
Tel: 033-3438254 or 0832340475

Fax: 033-343 82551 not
Toll-Free: 0800 000 996
Email: Nalini.Dickson@kzndard.gov.za

SPEECH BY MEC FOR KZN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR CYRIL XABA AT THE EVENT TO HAND OVER FINANCIAL COMPENSATION VOUCHERS TO ROOSBOOM LAND CLAIMANTS 11 JULY 2015

Chief Land Claims Commissioner, Ms Nomfundo Gobodo

Program Director and KwaZulu-Natal Land Claims Commissioner,
Advocate Bheki Mbili

Uthukela District Mayor, Cllr D Mazibuko

Emnambithi Mayor, Cllr MV Madlala

Councillors Present

Chairperson of the Roosboom Land Claimants Committee, Mr Moses Mazibuko

National, Provincial and Local Officials

Roosboom Land Claimants

Ladies and Gentlemen

Welcome to our celebration today, where government is putting right a wrongdoing of the past committed against the community of Roosboom.

Today, 581 land claimants will be receiving compensation amounting to more than R55,98 million. This is one of the largest pay outs made by the Land Claims Commission in our province.

Two earlier pay outs were also made to the Roosboom Community. In 2006, 350 former tenants of the area received compensation of over R12,78 million and in 2007, eleven former Roosboom land owners received compensation of R1,86 million.

The KZN Land Claims Commission must be commended for a job well done in settling these claims. I also thank the Roosboom community for forming a committee to pursue your claims in the correct manner and for your patience while your matter was being researched and processed. Your long wait is now

over and today marks a new beginning for the 581 households that will be receiving compensation for the loss of your homes more than 40 years ago.

The story of the removal of the Roosboom Community represents an important chapter in our Province's history. It is a story that must be taught to our children so that they understand our painful past and appreciate the freedom that we now enjoy.

Roosboom was declared a "black spot," after the passing of the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936. At that time, very few Black people were allowed to own land and the name "Black spots," referred to the farms that were owned by black people in areas where the surrounding farms were all White-owned. The authorities used the Act to identify "Black spots" that had to be removed so that the whole area could be White-owned. Following the 1936 law, 363 farms owned by Blacks became known as "Black Spots."

From about 1956, the apartheid government started removing people from these Black Spots, but the communities fought back, forming the Northern Natal Land-Owners Association. Elliot Mngadi who owned a farm in Roosboom was the secretary of the Association. He gave a talk in 1981 at a meeting of the Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA) in Ladysmith. He spoke about what happened. According to Mr Mngadi, around 1956 the government began moving people from "Black Spots." They started with Besters and he said that it took five to six years before the people there could be moved. He went on to say and I quote, "Next was Besterspruit near Vryheid. We tried to help but then of course the government steamrolled the whole thing and in 1963, the people were moved to Mondlo."

At Roosboom, the authorities used a different tactic. By 1960, the Local Health Commission placed the area under control that no new houses could be built or improvements done on the existing homes. Tenants and land owners were told that they had to get permission to put up new structures, but of course this permission was never granted. Homes began to fall apart as families grew and there was not enough room for everybody. Many tenants decided that they had no choice but to move.

By 1972, the township of Ezakeni was built and by 1974, landowners in Roosboom began to receive expropriation notices and the removals began. Government trucks known as "GG's" because they had GG written on their number plates arrived and were used to move people to Ezakeni and other areas. There was resistance in the area and Mr Mngadi described the case of Mr Kamani who was fined for building on his land. He returned and built again and was charged. He had to appear in court, his house was later destroyed and in the end, he just had to give up.

The pain of the removal was deepened when people were told they could not take their cattle, goats or sheep. They also found that the plots they were given in Ezakeni were so small that they could no longer grow food to feed their families. There were other hardships that the families had to endure. They had

to pay rents that were suddenly increased. Roosboom was only seven kilometres from Ladysmith, but Ezakeni was twenty five kilometres away, meaning that families now had to have more money for transport costs. Those who chose to live on site and service plots, were given tin huts and they found that they could not put up wattle and daub huts because the soil in the area was clay and could not be used for building. The only alternative, was to use cement but this was expensive because of transport costs. Many people just continued to stay in overcrowded conditions in their tin huts.

Mr Mngadi ended his talk at the AFRA meeting by saying and I quote, "At Roosboom, I had planned for my old age that I would keep five cows and my own chickens. You know when you have your own milk, your own chickens, what do you want? I get a visitor, I slaughter a chicken, a best friend, I slaughter a sheep. In winter I slaughter a beast for my children, because it is cold, the meat will not spoil quickly. That is the life I had planned for my old age."

Today, 581 households made up of 1250 beneficiaries have a chance to plan their futures. As MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development in this province, I hope these plans include going back to your roots of farming as you did in Roosboom. The tragedy of forced removals meant that many of our people lost touch with the land.

In a free South Africa you have opportunities opening up in the field of agriculture. Please encourage members of your family to take up farming. They will be following in the footsteps of the older generation of Roosboom whose dreams of living in their old age surrounded by their gardens and their livestock were shattered. As we celebrate today, let us not forget the sacrifices made by the older generation.

I thank you!