



agriculture  
& rural development

Department:  
agriculture  
& rural development  
**PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

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**SPEECH BY THE MEC FOR THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND  
RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR THEMBA MTHEMBU AT THE FINANCIAL  
COMPENSATION HANDOVER EVENT TO CELEBRATE THE SETTLEMENT  
OF THE EAST AND WEST HESLERTON COMMUNITY LAND CLAIM  
IN THE AMAJUBA DISTRICT**

**Date: 12 September 2016**

**Venue: Osizweni Art Centre, Osizweni**

Program Director

KwaZulu-Natal Land Claims Commissioner, Advocate Bheki Mbili

Amajuba District Mayor, Councillor M. Ngubane

Dannhauser Mayor, Councillor JP Phakathi

Councillors Present

Members of the East and West Heselton Land Claim Committees

National, Provincial and Local Officials

Land Claimants

Ladies and Gentlemen

Your long wait is over! Today we celebrate another successful land claim with over R28 million paid out to 254 families who were dispossessed of their homes and their land.

I understand from Advocate Mbili that this is phase one of the process. Valuations are still being conducted for the settlement of compensation to land owners who had title deeds rights for land in Heselton.

Ladies and Gentlemen, each community that was dispossessed of their land has its own story of loss, pain and suffering. All these stories together, provide a historical record of what has been described as one of the largest mass removals

of people in modern history. Those who have studied forced removals say that from 1960 to 1983, the apartheid government forcibly removed 3.5 million Black South Africans.

The story of the dispossessed Dannhauser communities adds an interesting chapter to this history. It shows that families were harassed over a long period of time, it exposes the trickery of first the British Colonial Government and then the Apartheid government as they set about depriving Black people of their land.

Heslerton was owned by Black farmers who held the title deeds to their land. Many sublet to tenants and there were thriving farming communities living on the land. This did not sit well with the colonial authorities. The successful black farmers were competing with the white farmers. The situation also did not fit in with the racist tendencies of the day. So the Colonial Government went on to pass the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936. The authorities used the Act to identify "Black spots" which referred to the farms that were owned by black people in areas where the surrounding farms were all White-owned. The authorities said these black land owners and their tenants had to be removed so that the whole area could be White-owned.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the harassment of your families can be traced back to 1944. It was when the Office of the Chief Native Commissioner of Pietermaritzburg wrote a memorandum pointing out that East and West Heslerton were "Black Spots"

To quote from his memorandum, he said: "The two farms are sandwiched between the properties of the Durban Navigation Collieries (who hold a number of mineral leases over portions of these properties.) They form a "black spot" in a European area. The conditions there constitute a nuisance from the public health aspect."

Isn't it interesting, the Colonial masters considered our people a nuisance and a health hazard. The Commissioner also pointed out that this "black spot" was just five miles away from the town of Dannhauser and this did not fit in with another law, which prohibited blacks from living too close to urban areas.

Today, we are still struggling with the legacy of forced removals where black people were made to settle in townships and homelands, far away from their places of employment in the cities. This meant that a large part of their wages had to be spent on transport costs, presenting terrible hardships for families. People did not accept their forced removals and resisted being moved. Cheryl Walker, a former Land Claims Commissioner, wrote extensively about the situation. She said that many tenants refused to accept their eviction notices and were driven off by police. Farmers who came with dogs and guns and fire, burned down huts, impounded cattle and arrested the people still living on the land. Walker quoted the experience of a group of labour tenants here in Dannhauser who related what had happened to them, exposing the trickery of the Colonial masters.

They were given letters of eviction and these tenants believing that they could reasonably negotiate with the authorities went to the Native Commissioner's office. They said the Commissioner wanted to know their ideas so they told him

they needed assistance because their children were no longer keen to work on the farms. He promised them he would approach his senior officer in Pietermaritzburg. But, while they were waiting to hear the outcome of their request, they were arrested and kept in the Dannhauser prison and fined R30 per person. The tenants still negotiated in good faith, they told the Magistrate to call the senior Magistrate from Pietermaritzburg and also requested help from the KwaZulu-Natal Homeland government. Both these authorities told them they had to move to Nondweni. The tenants said they could not move there because Nondweni was a town and what would happen to their cattle. They wanted to live in a rural area.

Their polite requests were met with further false promises. Let me quote their words directly as recorded by Walker: "The Commissioner advised us not to sell our beasts and further promised to fix something for us within a period of six months. During the waiting period, we were summoned to come before the Commissioner's court at Dannhauser where we were told that we were not required in the place and further were threatened that if we did not move away, we would be arrested and sentenced to imprisonment....We told him that we were not refusing to move but were still waiting for a decision from Pietermaritzburg...

They went on to say that on 15 July 1976, GG trucks arrived with soldiers, police and their dogs. They said they did not need any argument but had just come to move us to Qudeni. We enquired how we can be moved while we are still waiting for something from the Commissioner in Pietermaritzburg. We were told that what was happening, was on his instructions."

The chapter of forced removals in Dannhauser tells the story of treachery and betrayal. People were given false hope but in the end, they lost everything. Apparently these tenants with their spirits broken, finally submitted to the GG removal trucks when they arrived.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is why the ANC government is committed to redress in the land reform process. We have to reverse the legacy of betrayal, loss and pain that our people suffered. At the Party's 52<sup>nd</sup> conference in Mangaung, land reform and rural development was made a priority. As a result of this commitment and process, we are here today celebrating the successful settlement of your land claim.

I believe that initially, you wanted to return to the land but this was not possible as the land is now an old used mine that is no longer fit for farming. My plea to you is to use your compensation wisely and make your ancestors proud.

Today we are wiping away the pain of the past. Yes, we will record our painful history because we must not forget the suffering our people endured. But we can be joyous that we are now free and have overcome years of treachery and betrayal. This is the commitment of the ANC led Government to continue to put right the wrongs suffered by our people and rebuild our society.

I thank you.