

**SPEECH OF THE FREE STATE MEC FOR SPORT, ARTS, CULTURE AND RECREATION,
MR DAN KGOHULE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE THABONG DANCE COMPETITION FOR THE
DISABLED, THABONG/WELKOM**

28 October 2011

Programme Director
Honoured Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen
Comrades

I wish to thank the organisers of this event for their efforts in ensuring that people with disabilities continue to be at the centre-stage of government programmes. I must also specifically commend the Thabong Arts and Culture Centre for the wonderful work that they do in this community. In deed you vision and commitment to the community you serve is an example of what can be achieved if we all work together towards a common course.

In June this year we successfully hosted the Provincial Disability Games in Sasolburg. The event which had the participation of about 680 physically challenged athletes provided an opportunity for athletes to compete professionally in various sport codes and also enabled us to identify athletes that would represent the province at the nation disability games.

As a department we are proud of the dedication displayed by differently abled people in the areas of arts and culture as well as sport and recreation. My department is committed to promoting arts and sport in our communities and the inclusion of disabled people is critical in this regard. It is critical that we collectively identify problem areas that impact negatively to the development of arts and sport, and that we put in place programmes that are aimed at resuscitating these activities in our communities.

Let me indicate that arts and sport are activities that can be very beneficial to physically challenged people. We need to take advantage of the many benefits that physical activity can give to people with disabilities. By providing platforms and developing programmes such as the Thabong Dance Competition for the Disabled, we are able to overcome the stigma associated with disability while also giving disabled people an opportunity to prove their worth in whatever they can.

It important that we provide disabled people with opportunities to be part of our sport and recreation initiative by providing facilities and equipment that will enable them to fully participate in these activities.

Let also emphasise the critical role played by arts and sport in the intellectual development of any individual and the subsequent advantages it has in his or her personal growth. I am impressed by the high number of participants in this competition as well as the involvement of special schools from other provinces.

My department will continue to prioritise and promote arts and sport activities for the disabled. We have in the past provided support, in the form of infrastructure and equipment, to various organisations that are involved in arts and sport activities for the disabled.

While we recognise the importance of providing the necessary equipment and infrastructure, we also believe that it is crucial to focus on the management and administration arts and sport in the province. The establishment of various structures for the arts and sport is geared towards achieving this objective. Proper leadership is necessary and quality leadership has to be provided to give direction

and ensure unity in all programmes we run as the department and this includes disabled arts and sport activities.

I sincerely hope that the Thabong Arts and Culture Centre will continue with this programme and I hope to see this initiative grow in future. All the best to those who will be participating in this completion. I wish to remind you that despite the physical challenges you are faced with you have the potential to achieve anything as long as you remain focused and have a positive outlook at life.

May I take this opportunity to wish all the participants the best in this competition. May the best team win.

I thank you.

Issued by: Free State Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation