

ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, Ms. MC MASILELA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE LIQUOR TRADERS WORKSHOP ON RESPONSIBLE LIQUOR TRADING, LICENSING AND COMPLIANCE MATTERS HELD AT THE TOWN HALL IN MASHISHING, THABA CHWEU LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Tuesday, 29 October 2024

Programme Director, Mr. Gwebu, who is the station manager of Mash-FM;
Executive Mayor of Thaba Chweu Local Municipality, Cllr. Mayor Frieda Nkadimeng;

CEO of MER, Mr. Vusi Mtsweni, and the team from MER;

Chairperson of the Mpumalanga Liquor Traders Association, Mr. Richard Kabini;

Heineken Beverages Sales Manager, Mr. Vusi Nkosi;

Community Safety Officer from the sister Department of Community Safety, Security and Liaison, Mr. Benjamin Mthembu;

The representative of the South African Police Service;

Industry stakeholders;

Government and municipality officials;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

San'bonani/Good Morning!

1. It gives me pleasure and privilege, to address this critical workshop, where we come together as stakeholders **to promote responsible liquor trading**, to and address the challenges facing our communities.

2. Our collective objective, through this Workshop, is to foster an industry that not only contributes to our economy, but does so in a way that **prioritises public safety, community well-being, and respect for the law.**
3. As the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, together with our public entity, the Mpumalanga Economic Regulator and all industry players, we have **a shared commitment towards responsible liquor trading.**
4. This is not just about compliance; it's about **ensuring that the operation of liquor outlets contributes positively to the social fabric of Mpumalanga.**
5. Responsible trading means **minimising alcohol-related harms and promoting a culture of moderation.** It requires that we, as a united industry, uphold the highest standards of conduct.
6. Our mandate is very clear: **we must work together to reduce the harms associated with alcohol misuse.**
7. Together with our public entity, the MER, we are dedicated **to support interventions, education programmes, and awareness campaigns** that drive behavioural change.
8. This includes our ongoing efforts to develop tools and systems, such as the **MER-Online and SMS license validation systems, to enhance compliance.**

9. By ensuring that our trading practices are safe, regulated, and compliant, we can **collectively work to protect our communities from the adverse impacts of alcohol misuse.**
10. As liquor traders, it is crucial that your **operations co-exist harmoniously with the communities** around you. This includes respecting community-specific concerns, **such as reducing noise**, particularly during sensitive periods like the matric examination season.
11. We urge you to **observe reduced noise levels and limit disruptions**, showing consideration for the young people preparing for their future.
12. These practices help build stronger, more supportive relationships with your neighbours, and contribute to an environment where businesses and communities thrive side by side.
13. Today's workshop offers a valuable platform for engagement on key compliance issues. We must all recognise the importance of **adhering to liquor laws**, including trading within licensed hours, adhering to municipal zoning regulations, and ensuring the integrity of license conditions.
14. **Operating ethically, is also paramount**, as it builds trust with both customers and the surrounding communities.

15. Programme Director; Our communities face various challenges, and as an industry, we have the power and responsibility to help address these. This includes **co-existence with neighbouring community amenities, such as schools and religious institutions, and maintaining a safe environment** around trading premises.
16. With your cooperation, we can **minimise complaints** related to non-adherence to trading hours, noise, traffic, and parking issues and take meaningful steps to reduce nuisances that impact community life.
17. Let us also **remain vigilant against illegal trading**, and take a firm stance against unlicensed operations, which undermine the industry's credibility and trustworthiness.
18. Ladies and gentlemen; the collaboration among our various stakeholders is, thus, crucial in ensuring the success of our collective efforts.
19. Together with municipalities, the South African Police Service, traditional authorities, and liquor trader associations, we are **working to implement reforms, educate traders on the implications of new legislation, and roll out tools to improve compliance**.
20. This united front would enable us to address not only our shared concerns, but also the unique challenges each stakeholder faces in the industry.

21. Programme Director; during the recent Provincial Liquor Indaba, **we received valuable feedback and recommendations** from a diverse range of stakeholders.
22. These recommendations are essential in building a sustainable and responsible liquor industry. As such, we are **committed to thoroughly process these recommendations**, to reinforce a sustainable and responsible liquor industry.
23. By fostering safer liquor outlets and enhancing compliance, we can **ensure that licensed traders operate within a secure and legal framework**, ultimately shielding the industry from being under siege of illegality and irresponsible trading that taint the industry's image.
24. In closing, I urge all liquor traders here today, to commit wholeheartedly to responsible trading, ethical business practices, and to support community well-being.
25. Let this workshop be a reminder of our shared vision – **An industry that upholds the values of responsibility, compliance, and respect for our communities.**
26. Thank you for your dedication, for your partnership in this journey, and for **your commitment towards building a better Mpumalanga.** Let us continue to work together to make our Province a safer, more harmonious place for all.
27. I wish you fruitful engagement during this Workshop!

28. We ***Leave No One Behind***, as ***We Grow Mpumalanga Together!***

Ngiyabonga!