



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Walking Bus initiative to be launched in Knysna**

Western Cape Minister of Community Safety, Dan Plato accompanied by SAPS Eden Cluster Commander, Major General Oswald Reddy, Knysna Police Station Commander, Colonel Atwell Metu, Cluster and Chairperson of the Knysna CPF, Cheryl Britz engaged with the community on Monday, 10 October to discuss the planning and implementation of the Walking Bus initiative and matters surrounding the Safety and Security of Greater Knysna.

The MEC's Walking Bus initiative aims to create a safe and supervised route for learners to and from school on a daily basis. This programme is reliant on the partnership and involvement of the community and other relevant stakeholders who will play an integral role creating a safer environment for Knysna's pupils.

Minister Plato, together with Knysna Executive Mayor, Eleanore Bouw-Spies, the South African Police Services (SAPS), the Community Police Forum (CPF) and Councillors visited schools around Knysna as part of the planning phase of this Walking Bus initiative. Following the walk-about the stakeholders headed to Vermont Old Age Home to continue their discussions further.

Bouw-Spies said, "I am looking forward to the implementation of the Walking Bus project. This could not have come at a better time. Recently we have been looking at ways of making our town safe for all and launched a CCTV project about a month ago. We have also been in discussions with various stakeholders with regard to crime prevention and now can add this learner safety initiative to the list. If we continue to work together in this manner we will create a safe town for all."

The idea around the Walking Bus initiative is for parents to be the "drivers" of the "bus". For the initiative to be a success it is important for these parents to become involved in the safety of their children by becoming more involved in the school. This initiative is supported by CPF, Ward Councillor, relevant schools and the Department of Community Safety to ensure the safety of the pupils to and from school.

Following the walk around Hornlee, the delegation moved to the Knysna Municipality where concerned members of the public joined in discussions surrounding safety and security of Greater Knysna.

MEC Plato said that the issue of safety and security is not a matter for the SAPS alone. "We need to involve all relevant stakeholders such as the Municipality Law Enforcement and Traffic departments, the private security companies, the CPF as well as neighbourhood Watches."

The minister was optimistic that Knysna's issues can be overcome if all sectors work together. "We can't allow Knysna to get to the stage that Cape Town is in with gang related crime."

Relating to problems with school related violence Minister Plato acknowledged that his department had recognised Knysna Secondary and Concordia High Schools as two problem schools within Greater Knysna. "When I return to Cape Town I will be consulting with my colleague, Debbie Schafer [minister of education] to see how we can address this issue."

He further noted that after visiting a number of schools earlier in the morning there wasn't "any real parental involvement" at the schools. "It has been noted that when parents and civil society come on-board, violent perpetrators stay away."

He suggested that the current registered Neighbourhood Watches in the area assist those areas hard hit by crime in establishing their own Neighbour Watches. "We need to encourage our communities to get involved in these Neighbourhood Watches."

The meeting was then opened for members of the public to voice their concerns to all stakeholders present.

"Safety is everyone's responsibility and through community activation and partnerships, such as the empowerment of Neighbourhood Watches and Walking Bus initiatives, safer communities can be reached," concluded Minister Plato.

**ENDS**

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