

Media statement

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TO: All Media

ATTENTION: News Editors / Transport Reporters / All Reporters

CREECY AND HLENGWA DIRECT FOR TIGHTER LAW ENFORCEMENT ON SCHOLAR TRANSPORT AFTER A FATAL CRASH INVOLVING LEARNERS

PRETORIA: The Minister of Transport, Ms. Barbara Creecy and the Deputy Minister, Mr. Mkhuleko Hlengwa have expressed their shock at the horrific crash to which they were woken on Monday morning. They are conveying their condolences to the bereaved families who lost their children in this head-on collision involving a scholar transport minibus and a truck, where twelve (12) children met their untimely death on the R553 Golden Highway in Vanderbijlpark, Gauteng, on 19 January 2025. They have also wished for a speedy recovery of those injured and currently recuperating in hospital.

Creecy and Hlengwa have instructed traffic law enforcement agencies, including the RTMC National Traffic Police, to intensify their law enforcement operations with a specific focus on scholar transport throughout the country. They have stressed the fact that these enforcement operations must intensify the focus on overloading, roadworthiness and speeding, all of which were central to saving lives in the previous year and over the festive season, remaining critical focus areas for the department's 365 Day Road Safety and Arrive Alive programmes.

They have highlighted that the lack of law enforcement operations on scholar transport has brought the country's scholar transport service to its knees. They have also made a clarion call to the scholar transport operators as well as buses and taxi associations to get their act together or face the full might of the law.

A week ago, Creecy and Hlengwa embarked on a back to school campaign with a specific focus on scholar transport. Out of that campaign they have underlined that government will adopt a zero tolerance attitude to lawlessness and non-compliance by private operators and drivers of learner transport. They will also ensure that there is impoundment of unroadworthy scholar transport and the arrest of reckless learner transport drivers.

They have, in addition, taken a decision to embark on an unannounced law enforcement blitz in schools to conduct scholar transport inspections, starting this week.

They have made a clarion call to all scholar transport operators to strictly obey the road traffic regulations outlined in the Scholar Transport Policy and the National Road Traffic Act.

They further urged all spheres of government dealing with scholar transport to adhere to the recently reviewed National Road Safety Strategy which underscores the importance of law enforcement in addressing overloading and roadworthiness of vehicles. The Road Safety Strategy requires regular vehicle roadworthiness tests for all scholar transport vehicles, whether contracted or not with the respective Departments. It also points out the importance of consistent road safety education, awareness, and training for operators, drivers, and learners, particularly regarding emergency exit procedures.

Creecy and Hlengwa concluded by stating that the Department is in the final stages of reviewing the National Learner Transport Policy to tackle crucial issues relating to the safety of learner transport and access to reliable scholar transportation. The policy will be presented to the Cabinet for approval in due course. However, they have stated that unroadworthy vehicles have nothing to do with the policy. Operators and associations must obey the rules of the road and ensure that their vehicles are roadworthy.

Meanwhile, the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) is investigating the cause of the crash in collaboration with local authorities. The preliminary report will be released on Thursday 22 January.

Both Minister Creecy and Deputy Minister Hlengwa will host a doorstep media briefing later in the week to address media questions on the above matters.

ISSUED BY: National Department of Transport

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