Our invited guests
Stakeholders
Members of the media
Members of the Department, volunteers included
Ladies and gentlemen

This is a proud day for the Department, and the province of KwaZulu-Natal as a whole. Today we are gathered here not only to mark the official launch of this wonderful facility and the technology linked to it. We are here to show how serious government is about building a united front against crime. The Volunteer Social Crime Prevention Project as you might know is a crime prevention project whose success lies on hard work, dedication, commitment and support from the volunteers and communities where the project has been introduced.

I must begin by thanking you members of the media for responding positively to our invitation to this event to launch our call centre. It is commonly believed that if one invites the media, the majority of them would seldom pitch up, but would rather prefer the stories for which they need neither
invitation nor preparation. I am therefore pleased that you have joined us today for this launch.

We are here because as a Department, we realized that the fight against crime cannot be won by a few good men, but needs an army that includes us all working together to create a safer KwaZulu-Natal and country for ourselves, our children and all who live, work, visit and do business with us. This is vital as we edge closer to the 2010 FIFA World Cup and beyond.

This call centre has been set up to improve communication, monitoring and evaluation of the Volunteer Social Crime Prevention Project. It allows us to use technology to loosen the grip that criminals have on our society. Criminals, if given an opportunity would not hesitate to use the kind of technology we are witnessing here today for their own gain, so why should we.

Today we are then saying, government will stop at nothing to ensure that criminals do not win, including investing in technology and projects such as these. The technology linked to this facility is very advanced and was sourced specifically for the conditions under which our volunteers and Department operate in. As you may have seen from the tour of the facility, this system really does help us as government to see if we are getting our money’s worth by investing in the volunteer project.

This device, which already covers 1100 volunteers in Durban and the Jozini area up to the border with Mozambique, really empowers community safety activists to work closely with the emergency services and the SAPS. “As we gather experience in its day to day use we are establishing standard operating procedures and we will seek to roll the project out in other appropriate areas in the province.
This is an important technological step forward which will assist us in bringing peace and stability to our communities. VSCPP volunteers serve as the ‘eyes and ears’ of their communities and compliment the efforts of our local emergency services, law enforcement, and crime prevention agencies. They help improve safety and security by maintaining an active presence in their neighbourhoods and liaising with members of their community.

Today marks progress in our quest for greater things. I want to applaud all the role players in the project. For the Department of Community Safety and Liaison this is an important achievement in responding to the need for assessing impact of our programmes and in enhancing the quality of safety initiatives in place as we advance towards the 2010 FIFA World Cup and beyond.

Communication plays a pivotal role in the success of any project and the call centre, devices and technology linked to it will have a much needed boost to the VSCPP. Currently 1520 volunteers have been deployed as part of the Volunteer Social Crime Prevention Project in all 11 districts of KwaZulu-Natal with an additional 580 recently recruited. Each of these districts has a District Field Officer (DFO) that manages volunteers. Because of the large numbers of volunteers being deployed, an informal reporting structure was created below each DFO. This includes a team leader who gets reports from approximately 10 volunteers. The team leaders in turn report to the DFO. This was an informal arrangement put in place to improve communication between volunteers and the DFO’s.

Over the past year volunteers have been actively involved in social crime prevention activities in their respective communities to ensure community safety by:

- Patrolling through the neighbourhoods;
• Discouraging anti-social behaviour by speaking to people in the communities;
• Empowering victims of crime by visiting and assisting them with advice and guidance on how best to access government services available for victims;
• Holding awareness sessions and workshops at schools;
• Providing marshalling in crime awareness campaigns and anti-crime projects of the department and for other provincial government departments;
• Distributing departmental educational material to their communities;
• Participating in the festive season crime prevention campaigns;
• Conducting door-to-door campaigns on crime related issues

However, communication remained a challenge as it was extremely difficult for the volunteers to perform their function of social crime prevention which involves a lot of communication. In addition, it was almost impossible for the DFO’s and the Project Co-ordinator to monitor the whereabouts of the volunteers and to ensure that the volunteers were deployed as per the deployment plan.

In the spirit of furthering the VSCPP so that it reaches the objectives set out for the project, the setup and implementation of the project’s communication, monitoring and evaluation system has been finalized. The call centre together with the mobile devices will assist in tracking and monitoring social crime prevention volunteers as they do their work. It will also be used to transfer and analyze data received daily from devices that have been sourced specifically for this purpose. Even though the VSCPP project has recorded a number of victories since its inception in early 2008, there was up until now no way of presenting precise monitoring and evaluating of its impact across the province.
The key benefits of the call centre and the technology linked to it include:

1. The communication and tracking devices to be used as a central command to manage volunteers on the field;

2. Detailed reporting at an incident level with the ability to track statistics and evaluate crime trends thus improving the overall reporting and governance of the project; and

3. A platform for which the Department could use in its other programs.

When all of this has been operationalised, we can truly say the Province of KwaZulu-Natal has succeeded in building a popular front against crime.