CASSIM: GOVERNMENT MUST INVEST IN COMMUNITIES TOO OFTEN OVERLOOKED

REMARKS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING, MR YUSUF CASSIM, MP

Launch of the Liquid Intelligent Technologies Mobile Digital Lab
Fontein Primary School | Monday, 19 October 2026

Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, Mr Solly Malatsi,

The CEO of Cassava Technologies, Liquid Intelligent Technologies, Mr Ziyaad Suleman,

Representatives of Liquid Intelligent Technologies,

The principal of Fontein Primary School, Mr Gary Groenewald,

Councillor Ingrid van Wyk and our programme director,

Officials from the Provincial Department of Education,

Educators, parents and community members,

And, most importantly, the learners of Fontein Primary School.

Good morning.

I want to begin by telling you why today is personal to me.

I live here in Nelson Mandela Bay, in the Northern Areas. These are communities I know, people I work alongside, and neighbourhoods whose future I care deeply about. Like any parent, I think about the hopes I have for my four daughters and the opportunities I want them to have. I want the same for the children growing up in our communities. I want them to have a fair chance to realise their potential and build a future they can be proud of.

Because talent is everywhere in South Africa. Opportunity is not.

For too long, people in communities like ours have felt that when government investment arrives, it goes elsewhere. Their concerns are heard but not always acted

on. Their children are left waiting for opportunities that should never have been out of reach.

I know that frustration. I have spent years fighting to change it.

And I have often asked myself a simple question: What is the point of being in government if we cannot use our participation to make a meaningful difference in the lives of communities that need investment?

That is a question of responsibility.

People do not experience democracy through promises alone. They experience it when services reach their neighbourhoods, when doors begin to open, and when they can see that their concerns and their children's futures matter.

A community should never have to fight this hard just to be seen.

That is why today's launch matters to me and to this community.

Minister Malatsi, thank you for responding to my request for support in bringing a digital laboratory to one of our local schools.

Long before I became Deputy Minister, education, skills development and expanding opportunities for young people were priorities for me. Having worked closely with our schools and communities over the years, I know how much talent exists here, but also how easily young people can miss out when they lack access to the right tools and resources.

I also want to acknowledge Councillor Ingrid van Wyk for her work in supporting our community and helping advance the interests of local residents.

I approached Minister Malatsi because I wanted learners at Fontein Primary School to have the opportunity to engage with technology, develop new skills and explore possibilities that might otherwise have remained beyond their reach.

I am grateful to Minister Malatsi and Liquid Intelligent Technologies for helping turn that request into something tangible for our learners.

This mobile digital laboratory will give learners the opportunity to develop digital and artificial intelligence literacy, explore new technologies and begin building skills that will become increasingly important in further education and the world of work.

But the real significance of today is not the equipment. It is what our learners might do with it.

Look at the children in front of us. One of these learners may become an engineer. Another may build a business or develop a technology that changes lives. And one of them may one day become the President of South Africa.

Why not?

A child's circumstances should never become a ceiling on their ambitions.

That is why equitable development matters. This is not about taking opportunities away from one community to give them to another. It is about ensuring that every community has a fair chance to benefit from investment and progress.

We cannot speak about equal opportunity while some children continue to feel that their communities have been left behind. Every child deserves to know that their future matters, regardless of their circumstances or the neighbourhood in which they grow up.

As Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, I know that our responsibility extends beyond the school gate. We must connect what learners discover here to further education, vocational training, skills development and employment. We must also help young people find and access those opportunities.

Minister Malatsi's work with his partners is an important example of what can be achieved when government and the private sector work together to create opportunities.

Our ambition is to build partnerships that can reach more learners and communities, equipping young people with skills that will help them participate in a changing economy. We want to see more communities benefit from these kinds of initiatives.

The laboratory must be used. Educators must be supported. Learners must be encouraged to explore. We must keep identifying where investment is needed and work with partners who can help deliver it.

Tomorrow, another digital laboratory will be launched at Soutpan Primary School. These are important steps forward, but they must not be the end of the journey. I want to see continued investment in these schools and in other communities that are still waiting for their turn.

To the learners of Fontein Primary School, I want to leave you with this:

Never allow anyone to make you feel that your dreams are too big for where you come from.

You belong in the world of technology, science, innovation and ideas. You deserve the chance to learn, to experiment, to make mistakes and to discover what you are capable of achieving.

Your dreams are valid. Your future matters. And you are worthy of investment.

To our partners and to government, the true measure of today will not be the photographs we take or the equipment we unveil. It will be what happens after we leave: the skills these learners develop, the opportunities they access and the futures they are empowered to pursue.

I will continue to push for that investment because I believe our communities deserve it, and because our children deserve every opportunity to fulfil their potential.

We must not ask our children to believe in a future that we are unwilling to invest in.

Let us give them the tools, skills and opportunities to build that future for themselves.

Thank you.