

# Thembalethu Sexual Offences Court launched in WC

## Nana Mzila

As you enter the building, you are welcomed by the smell of fresh paint, proceeding through the corridors; you are immediately struck by bright colours on the wall complemented with unique sky blue chairs.

All these features are clear indications that renovations and facelift had just been completed at the **Thembalethu Sexual Offences Court, in George, Western Cape.**

The court was designed to provide support and specialised services to victims of sexual abuse such as women and children and is now victim-friendly. It allows victims to be separate from the public and perpetrators during court proceedings.



*Unveiling the plague: Deputy Minister Mr John Jeffery unveiling the revamped Thembalethu Sexual Offences Court*

Now that it is ready for utilisation, the fully equipped court was launched by the Deputy Minister, Mr John Jeffery, MP, on **15 May** and forms part of the 11 courts established in 2016/17 financial year.

Addressing the community in Thembalethu, Deputy Minister Jeffery highlighted that gender-based and sexual violence cuts across race, class and age victims should report such cases.

“In March this year, our Department facilitated dialogues on intimate Femicide with a view of raising awareness about this scourge. That is why we conducted these dialogues with women to encourage them to speak out,” he said, adding that it is important to continue looking for sustainable solutions to deal with domestic violence, especially intimate Femicide.

Western Cape Division of the High Court, Judge President, John Hlophe, commended the work done by the Department to protect the rights of women and children.

“It is a great achievement that these courts are established across the country. However, that is only part of the solution to this scourge. We must also look closely at why men continue to rape and murder women otherwise we will continue building these courts,” he said.

An intermediary from the Thembalethu Sexual Offences Court said she was ecstatic about the revamping project as it makes the court more victim-friendly. “The waiting area and the testifying room is now more child-friendly with bright colours. Children will now be able to testify without the interference of other people passing by,” she said.

At the end of the launch, community members were given the opportunity to ask the Deputy Minister questions and he promised to come back to check if their complaints had been met after he left.



Deputy Minister Jeffery interviewed by the media during before the launch of Themba lethu Sexual Offences Court



Judge President John Hlophe addressing members of the Themba lethu community



Thembaletu community members listening to Deputy Minister Mr John Jeffery.