



**MINISTRY
PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE
BATHO PELE AI CHATBOX

REMARKS BY
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MINISTER FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE
AND ADMINISTRATION

Batho Pele House, 3RD Floor Boardroom: 31 July 2026

09H00

Programme Director,
Senior Government Officials representatives from:
The Presidency,
Department of Communications and Digital Technology,
Government Communications,
Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs
Partners from Academia and Civil Society
Ladies and Gentlemen

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Good morning and thank you for joining us today.

Today we launch more than technology. Today we launch a new way of keeping our oldest promise - which is “Batho Pele – People First”.

For 29 years, Batho Pele has demanded one thing; that be present for the citizen. Be present with information. Be present with clarity. Be present with answers.

For too long, “access to information” in government has meant long waits, wrong doors, and too much jargon. Today, that changes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Batho Pele AI Chatbot is the brainchild of a public-private partnership between the Department of Public Service and Administration, Meta and Juicetel.

It is a solid step forward in government's efforts to modernise public service delivery through the innovative use of technology. And its purpose is simple and powerful - to give public servants instant access to public service policy updates, circulars, legislation and other important information.

The Chatbot is able to process information and respond in nine South African official languages. It will support public servants, particularly those in Corporate Services and management roles, by cutting the time spent searching for policy updates and circulars - so they can spend more time solving problems for citizens.

No more searching through 10 documents to answer one question.

No more citizens being bounced between departments because no one has the answer. No more inconsistent advice because we couldn't find the latest circular.

With this tool, reliable government knowledge is now at our fingertips. Resulting in quicker responses, consistent decisions, and a Public Service that is more professional, ethical and accountable. This is how we honour the Framework Towards the Professionalisation of the Public Service.

Today marks the convergence of technology, AI and a government committed to putting people first.

The foundation we build today is a future of human connections and the technology that makes it possible, guided by a mission of putting people first. From this foundation, we chart a clear path forward.

Together, we are building a future where technology does not distance us from people, but brings us closer to them. A future where every citizen, in any of our nine official languages, can connect to the information, services and dignity they deserve.

That is the promise of this partnership, and that is the future we are choosing to build together.

Programme Director,

We are clear that access must be responsible access. As government, we will deploy this AI with the values of our Constitution at the centre - which is transparency, accountability, privacy, security, and fairness.

This Chatbot does not make decisions. It does not replace human judgment. It supports public servants to make better, faster, and more informed decisions - with empathy and accountability that only a human can provide.

Because information without wisdom is not service. And technology without values is not Batho Pele.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

None of this would be possible without partnership. I wish to express our sincere appreciation to Meta and Juicetel. At this moment, when citizens demand speed, accuracy and dignity in how government communicates, Meta is the timeliest and most strategic partner we could have.

Meta brings the capability to deliver information at scale, securely and responsibly, across multiple languages. Juicetel brings the local

understanding to make it work for our context. Together with DPSA, we have built a tool that is both innovative and grounded.

Government cannot navigate the digital age alone. By partnering with the private sector, academia and civil society, we ensure that our solutions are not only cutting-edge, but citizen-centred.

To Meta and Juicetel, we thank you for helping us turn “People First” from a principle into a platform.

The strategic value of this collaboration is that it creates a replicable foundation for the whole of government.

What we are launching today can be scaled across national departments, provinces, municipalities and public entities, because the core challenge is the same everywhere: citizens and officials need trusted, up-to-date information at the point of service.

By leveraging this partnership, government can establish a single, secure knowledge backbone; maintained centrally but tailored locally - that ensures policy, legislation and service standards are interpreted consistently.

This reduces duplication, lowers the cost of training, and frees public servants to spend more time on problem-solving.

Over time, we will extend the platform to frontline services: Health, Home Affairs, SASSA, Education and Local Government, making “Batho Pele” a lived experience in every office and on every device.

South Africa also has a responsibility and an opportunity to lead on digital governance in Africa. As one of the most connected economies on the continent, with strong institutions and a constitutional commitment to transparency, we are well positioned to model how AI can strengthen, not replace, the human face of the state.

If we get this right, this partnership becomes a blueprint that other African governments can adapt - a demonstration that technology and public service values can advance together.

In the future, this means faster harmonization of services across borders, better sharing of best practice, and a Public Service that uses AI to close the information gap that has for too long excluded the most vulnerable. Ultimately, the value is not just efficiency.

It is trust. A trusted and informed government is the foundation for inclusive growth, social cohesion and the capable state our continent needs for the next 30 years.

This launch is the beginning. Our task now is to scale access to information across the Public Service, to train officials to use this tool well, and to continuously update the knowledge base so that what the Chatbot says is always current, correct, and in line with policy.

And we must measure ourselves by one question: did this make it easier for a citizen to get the information they need? If yes, then we are living Batho Pele, because AI is not the destination. It is the vehicle. The destination is a professional, ethical, capable Public Service where no citizen is left in the dark about their rights and how to access them.

Let us commit today to a Public Service that is digitally enabled, but always human. A Public Service that answers quickly, answers correctly, and answers with respect. Technology will evolve. Our principles will not – which is “Put People First”.

I thank Meta, Juicetel, and every official who made this possible.

Let us use this tool to restore trust, one answer at a time.

I thank you.