

**Minister Pandor's speech to graduates of the Wholesale and Retail SETA's 2017 Retail Management Development Programme**

Department of Higher Education and Training

Thursday, 5 April 2018

Birchwood Hotel, Johannesburg

On the 27 March 2018 President Cyril Ramaphosa launched the Youth Employment Service (YES) Programme, an employment initiative with business playing a central role in offering workplace-based-learning opportunities for young people.

Companies participating in YES will provide one-year paid work experience opportunities to thousands of unemployed young people.

International and local experience has shown that this is an absolutely crucial intervention, because it provides young people with daily experience of the work environment, of the discipline required to hold down and progress in a job, and of the importance of acquiring and continually expanding one's skills.

Young people without work experience battle to get a foot on the first rung of the work ladder. Those who have benefitted from programmes such as these have made it onto the ladder and can, experience shows, keep climbing.

SETAs are playing an important skills development role, programmes such as YES could assist in ensuring beneficiaries

are absorbed into the economy as employees and emerging entrepreneurs.

Thus you will not only be improving prospects of young people, but you will also be contributing to building a more inclusive and sustainable economy.

It's a pleasure to be part of this event, as we celebrate the achievement of the 209 graduates of the 2017 Retail Management Development Programme here today.

The wholesale and retail sector has a major role to play in training young people, and in supporting growth in our economy.

According to Statistics South Africa, the wholesale and retail trade sector is the fourth largest contributor to South Africa's GDP.

It's one of the main pillars of our economy.

It employs about three million people - one in every five of the entire South African workforce.

Today's occasion demonstrates the working partnership between SETAs and institutions of learning.

I applaud this partnership between the W&R SETA and Enterprises University of Pretoria. It's the kind of collaboration we want to see.

I hope it will lead to diverse types of collaboration –That we will

have support to young people to start business to become producers, suppliers and experts of quality goods.

The W&R SETA has prioritised the development of skills at higher levels through the provision of bursaries at undergraduate level to ensure a pipeline of suitably skilled graduates for the future.

Through developing well designed programmes this SETA will make a critical contribution to our Human Resources Development strategy.

These initiatives as well as the SETA's highly acclaimed International Leadership Development Programme are professionalising the wholesale and retail sector.

I urge employers to put the delegates back to work, to implement their newly-acquired skills and knowledge, and to ensure that the sector derives the maximum benefit from the Programme.

To the graduands, I wish you a rewarding journey of lifelong learning ahead.

Your commitment to developing yourselves is the best investment you can make on your future.

Your class has recorded a completion rate of 90%. Well done.

You carry the aspirations of the wholesale and retail sector on your shoulders.

I encourage you to take advantage of other opportunities that are available through the SETA's programmes.

I wish you great success as you continue to honour the achievement of delegates through graduations that have been planned for Cape Town and Durban in the next couple of weeks.

I'm told that the SETA plans to enrol 400 delegates for the 2018 Programme.

I look forward the continued success of this Programme.

Thank you!