



**Remarks by Cllr Mxolisi Ndzimbomvu  
at the Autism Awareness Walk  
22 April 2017  
Durban, Ghandi Park**

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- Programme director - Mr Govender,
- Councillor Johnson Chetty,
- All medical representatives present,
- The Sunfield Home,
- All protocol observed,
- Ladies and gentlemen,
- Boys and girls

Sanibonani,

Firstly I would like to thank you all for having us here today, We are most honoured to be part of this year's Autism Awareness Walk, with the aim of spreading the word and creating autism acceptance by focusing on the struggles of people with autism and the importance a better understanding.

It is unfortunate that many people are still without understanding of Autism, and as a result because of the lack of information, stigmatise all people living with the condition. Many people forget that apart from the rare impairments, they just like you and me are human beings with unique strengths and differences and deserve to be given equal opportunities.

Programme director,

The way in which we spread the information out to the communities is our responsibility as the community and government. Autism is a complex neurobehavioral condition found from early childhood. And many people are not aware that the learning, thinking and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD can range from the gifted, as mentioned above, to the severely impaired. While others may need an intense level of support and others need less help.

It is unfortunate that In South Africa, there are no reliable recorded studies indicating the figures due stigma, under/and or over-diagnosis; cultural misperceptions and of course lack of access to medical assistance. With the right support measures taken, it is a fact that Autism can in fact be managed. Many will be shocked to find out that some of the brightest learners in schools are autistic, but sadly pupils with ASD are struggle to get jobs.

Throughout the years, eThekweni Municipality has been part of the initiative to raise awareness on Autism and will continue to do so, therefore we welcome the youth living with disabilities to take part in our learnership programmes which are found through our Municipal Academy.

EThekweni Mayor, Zandile Gumede recently tabled the 2017 budget in which she spoke about youth development and the need for youth progression, because we, as the municipality believe that our youth is capable of so much.

Programme director,

The total budget for the 2017/2018 financial year is R45 billion made up of an operating budget of R37.5 billion and a capital budget of R7.5. The focus of this budget will be directed to the key areas in line with our promises to improve the lives of our people.

All interventions including catalytic projects to grow our economy, food security programmes, job creation and ensuring that women as well as youth development programmes run in full steam, have all been budgeted for. We will continue to provide basic services such as grass cutting, verge maintenance, robot repairs, as well as prioritise cleanliness and drive inner city regeneration projects to build a City we can all be proud of.

With our commitment to fast track service delivery and provide basic services to our free basic services package, pensioners, child-headed households, disability grantees and the medically boarded are exempt from paying rates on the first R460 000 of their property value.

So as we draw closer to the end of the tenth annual World Autism Awareness month, I urge everyone to not stop today, but to continue even when no one is looking. So let us hold hands and shine a light on autism!

Thank you.