



Wes-Kaapse Provinsiale Parlement
Western Cape Provincial Parliament
IPalamente yePhondo leNtshona Koloni

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COMMITTEE REPORT

**Report of the Standing Committee on Health and Wellness on the Annual Report of the
Department of Health and Wellness for the 2022/23 financial year**

The 2023/24 strategic objectives of the WCPP linked to the Speaker's priorities, which have an impact on committees, are as follows:

Priority 1: Building a credible WCPP; and
Priority 3: Strengthening the core business.

The Standing Committee on Health and Wellness, having deliberated on the Annual Report of the Department of Health and Wellness for the year ended 31 March 2023, reports as follows:

1. Introduction

The Western Cape Provincial Parliament's (WCPP) Annual Report programme for the 2022/23 financial year was advertised in newspapers, as well as the WCPP's social media platforms, inviting stakeholders and members of the public to attend and participate in the discussions.

The Standing Committee on Health and Wellness (the Committee) deliberated on the Annual Report of the Department of Health and Wellness on 23 October 2023, as part of its oversight function. The Minister and the Head of Department were allowed to make opening remarks.

The Department was examined on:

Part A: General Information,

Part B: Departmental Performance Information; and

Part D: Human Resources Management of the Department's Annual Report.

Members of the public were also allowed to pose questions and give input during the discussions.

2. Overview

The Minister of Health and Wellness, Prof. N Mbombo, gave an overview of the performance of the Department during the 2022/23 financial year.

The Minister reported that the Department started the 2022/23 financial year with a budget cut of approximately R1.5 billion, huge constraints, and high demand for services due to the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Minister highlighted that since 2020, the Department had to reprioritise its resources to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in disruption to routine clinical services. During the term under review, the Department's goal was to recover routine clinical services while it continued to manage the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the Department's ability to perform elective surgeries, and by June 2022, the Western Cape had a significant surgical backlog. This prompted the Department to allocate additional funds to surgical services, which were utilised to decrease surgical waiting lists and provide much-needed elective surgeries to the patients.

Coupled with the service pressures was also the impact COVID-19 had on the well-being of residents. The population's mental health was compromised by various factors linked to an individual's well-being and socio-economic status. The Minister reported that since the start of the pandemic, there has been an increasing trend in the number of mental health admissions in the Western Cape. Adding to the mental health pressure caused by COVID-19 was the soaring prevalence of substance abuse,

which resulted in further hospital admissions and additional strain on health services. The Minister informed the Committee that load shedding severely disrupted health services and forced the Department to use generators to ameliorate its impact. This required an additional expenditure on diesel for generators. She indicated that with all the challenges, the year under review provided the Department with an opportunity to determine the future of the public healthcare system in a post-COVID-19 world.

She reported that the Department received a clean audit during the financial year under review. She also reported that the Department continues to implement the Reset Strategy “Health is Everybody’s Business” as the Department builds towards the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the realisation of the goals of Healthcare 2030.

Dr. K Cloete, the Head of the Department, also made opening remarks. He indicated that the end of the 2022/23 financial year marks 36 months since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and having transversed multiple waves of the pandemic, the Department has emerged more resilient and agile buoyed by system capabilities that have been built over a period of more than 20 years, despite, having to deal with the increased service demand due to the adverse impact that COVID-19 had in displacing routine health services. The Department continued to meet and exceed its targets.

Dr Cloete also reported that the reset agenda of the Department of Health and Wellness outlines the Department’s aspirations to become “ a health system that is people-centric, trusted and equitable” which provides the right care at the right time, in the right place, at the right price, empowered workforce, clean governance, and innovative and accessible service delivery.

3. Key points from the discussion on the Annual Report of the Department

- 3.1 The Department reported that COVID-19 had a significant impact on the surgical list and a substantial backlog developed in all areas.
- 3.2 Additional funds were made available during the previous financial year for the extra surgical list to reduce the backlog.
- 3.3 During the 2022/23 financial year, the Western Cape Government started the process of establishing a Violence Prevention Unit, following the success seen in the Cardiff Model for Violence Prevention.
- 3.4 The Department reported that it will share its extensive data with its partners to develop strategic and operational plans to address safety in the Western Cape. This will address all aspects of violence, including gender-based violence, children at risk of violence, and alcohol harm reduction.
- 3.5 During the financial year under review, the Department allocated an additional R30 million to further capacitate mental health services.
- 3.6 The Department invested in the Robotic Surgery Programme which played a crucial role in reducing recovery time in health facilities across the province.
- 3.7 During the 2022/23 financial year, the Department spent more than R100 million on fuel supplies for the generators to ameliorate the impact of load shedding.
- 3.8 To deal with load shedding, the Department successfully negotiated with Eskom and the City of Cape Town to exempt five hospitals from load shedding. It was reported that a total of ten health facilities in the Western Cape have been exempted from load shedding.

- 3.9 The Department reported that it had invested in innovation to strengthen service delivery by rolling out the Health Emergency Centre Tracking System (HECTIS), an information system that is premised on the clinical processes in Emergency Centres.
- 3.10 The system tracks patients as they receive care in an Emergency Centre, from the moment they enter, and are triaged by a nurse through every step in the clinical process.
- 3.11 There were 285 infrastructure projects in various stages of implementation during the 2022/23 financial year.
- 3.12 During the financial year under review, the Department reported that it provided services to 7 342 376 contacts in home and community-based care settings, and 30 950 patients were reported by facilities as started on drug-sensitive tuberculosis treatment of which 10.3% were children under 5 years of age.
- 3.13 Of those patients who started tuberculosis treatment in 2021, 75.4% successfully completed treatment, 19.3 % lost to follow-up, and 4.0 % died.
- 3.14 The Department reported that tuberculosis remains the leading cause of death attributable to communicable disease in South Africa and the COVID-19 pandemic reversed many years of progress prompting the Province to initiate an emergency response plan to improve treatment outcomes.
- 3.15 The Western Cape experienced an increase in mental health pressures through the service delivery platform with limited human resources to address patient load and pressure areas.
- 3.16 Three projects have been identified to strengthen the health system's response to the mental health burden.
- 3.17 To strengthen the mental healthcare services in the George Ecosystem, an additional 10 psychiatry beds will be allocated to the George Regional Hospital, and a social worker will be added to the district health service component.
- 3.18 The Paarl Ecosystem will add a psychologist to the Paarl Hospital and the West Coast District Health Service will acquire a social worker and a professional nurse.
- 3.19 Furthermore, in the Worcester Ecosystem, staff that include nurses, a counsellor, and therapists will be added to the Cape Winelands and Overberg District Health Service.
- 3.20 During the 2022/23 financial year, the HealthNet 40-seater bus service which transported patients between George and Cape Town was discontinued.
- 3.21 In addition, the Rx Solution rollout has also been discontinued due to the national Department of Health standardisation of pharmacy systems.
- 3.22 During the financial year under review, COVID-19 activities were discontinued as a stand-alone service and have been integrated into the day-to-day activities of comprehensive health services.
- 3.23 In November 2022, the Department piloted a 10-bed Transitional Care service in Sonstraal Hospital.
- 3.24 The national Department of Health piloted the implementation of Contracting Units for the Primary Healthcare Project in 2023 at Knysna/Bitou Health District.
- 3.25 During the financial year under review, 10 facilities were transferred from City Health to the Metro Health Services.
- 3.26 Despite the Department achieving its target in the financial year under review, the Department underspent by R54 million in Programme 1, Administration. The underspend was mainly attributed to the savings due to the delays in the filling of funded vacancies. In addition, the underspend was due to the savings in medico-legal claims due to delays in the administrative

due diligence process to pay all outstanding court orders where the Department had conceded merits, and this resulted in fewer medico-legal payments being processed than anticipated.

4. Public input

The Committee allowed members of the public to give input during the meeting. Ms. Kiewiets, the Chairperson of the Klipfontein Community Health Forum, gave input during the meeting. The Department duly responded and gave clarity to all questions posed by Ms Kiewiets.

5. Resolution

The Committee resolved to conduct an oversight visit to the George Hospital to assess the Planet Youth Pilot Project.

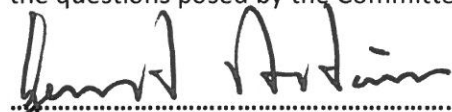
6. Information requested

The Committee requested the Department of Health and Wellness to provide it with the following information by Friday, 24 November 2023:

- 6.1 Detailed information on the total number of hospitals exempted from load shedding.
- 6.2 Report on the reasons for the discontinuation of the HealthNet service to transport patients between George and Cape Town and how the Department is providing the service to patients in the absence of HealthNet services.
- 6.3 A status update on the infrastructure project of the GF Jooste Hospital.
- 6.4 Detailed information on the number of staff absorbed by the Department from the Bracken Gate Hospital.
- 6.5 Detailed information on the number of staff that will be employed for mental health services with the additional budget allocation and the health facilities earmarked to get additional staff allocation.

7. Conclusion

The Chairperson thanked Members of the Committee, the Minister, the Head of the Department, the departmental officials, and health stakeholders for their attendance, preparation, and responses to the questions posed by the Committee.



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MR G PRETORIUS, MPP

**CHAIRPERSON: STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND WELLNESS
WESTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT**