

*Tuesday, 15 April 2025]*

No 30 - 2025] SECOND SESSION, SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

# PARLIAMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF THE WESTERN CAPE

## ANNOUNCEMENTS, TABLINGS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

TUESDAY, 15 APRIL 2025

### COMMITTEE REPORT

#### REPORT OF THE SOCIAL CLUSTER VISIT WEEK, 24 TO 25 FEBRUARY 2025

##### 1. Introduction

The Social Cluster Visit Week is a key mechanism established by the Western Cape Provincial Parliament to achieve its constitutional oversight mandate in the province. It is intended to ensure that Members of the Provincial Parliament, through its standing committees, continuously keep abreast of developments and delivery issues in the province. It also allows for oversight visits and interaction with communities to get first-hand information on the needs and challenges that are confronting people. The delegation also visited different facilities to assess projects that are implemented by various government departments in the province. The Social Cluster Visit Week allowed the Social Cluster's standing committees to visit the West Coast area. The following standing committees were part of the Social Cluster Visit Week:

Standing Committee on Police Oversight, Community Safety, Cultural Affairs and Sport;  
Standing Committee on Education;  
Standing Committee on Health and Wellness;  
Standing Committee on the Premier and Constitutional Matters; and  
Standing Committee on Social Development.

##### 2. The delegation

The delegation of the Social Cluster Visit Week included the following Members:

Kaizer-Philander, WF (DA) – Leader of the delegation  
Booyesen, M (DA)  
Van Minnen, BM (DA)  
Van Wyk, LD (DA)

Walters, TCR (DA)  
 Kamfer, F (ANC)  
 Ngqentsu, B (ANC)  
 Windvogel, R (ANC)  
 Sayed, K (ANC)  
 Christians, F (ACDP)  
 Jacobs, DG (NCC)  
 Stephens, D R (PA)

### **3. Visit to the Merweville Clinic on Monday 24 February 2025**

The Cluster A delegation conducted a visit to the Merweville Clinic. The purpose of the visit was to gather information on the clinic's operations, services and staffing challenges and successes and to assess its contribution to the local community in providing primary healthcare. Dr B Muller, the Medical Manager, Ms S Frieslaar, the Facility Manager, and Ms Z Albelson, the EMS Station Manager at Prince Albert, welcomed the delegation at the Merweville Clinic.

#### **3.1 Salient points on the Merweville Clinic**

- 3.1.1 The Merweville Clinic is a satellite primary healthcare facility under the Western Cape Government's health services.
- 3.1.2 The clinic is funded and overseen by the Department of Health and Wellness and plays a crucial role in delivering a wide range of healthcare services to the local population of Merweville and its surrounding areas.
- 3.1.3 Located in the Beaufort West subdistrict of the Central Karoo district, a rural area, the clinic offers essential primary healthcare services, including mother and child health, chronic disease management, women's health, HIV and TB care, men's health, acute care and allied health services, such as physiotherapy and mental health services.
- 3.1.4 These services are vital in maintaining the health and well-being of the community, addressing both preventative measures and treatment needs.
- 3.1.5 The Merweville Clinic operates Monday to Friday from 07:30 to 16:00 and serves a population of 1 033 people, with a headcount of 349 in January 2025.
- 3.1.6 The clinic's staff complement consists of both permanent and visiting personnel. Permanent staff members include one enrolled nurse, one enrolled nursing assistant and one cleaner.
- 3.1.7 The clinic is also supported by a range of visiting healthcare professionals who provide services weekly and monthly.
- 3.1.8 These professionals include an intern for information management, a health promoter, a dietitian, a counsellor, a professional nurse, a clinical nurse practitioner, a medical doctor, an allied healthcare practitioner and a visiting social worker. This diverse team ensures that the clinic can offer comprehensive care across various specialties.
- 3.1.9 It was reported that the doctor visits the clinic once a week on Mondays, while the clinical nurse practitioner and a pharmacist visit on Thursdays. The enrolled nurse stationed at the clinic has a limited scope of practice, so the clinical nurse practitioner visits the facility on Thursdays and performs examinations and diagnoses and prescribes medication to patients with the support of a pharmacist.
- 3.1.10 It was reported that there are no dedicated ambulance services in the area.
- 3.1.11 Ambulances are stationed in Leeu-Gamka and sometimes in Prince Albert. However, through the EMS (Emergency Medical Services) training, community members involved in the EFA Project can stabilise patients while waiting for ambulances. These trained individuals also assist EMS staff by assessing the need for an ambulance based on the severity of the patient's condition.

- 3.1.12 A total of seven community members have been trained through the EFA Project and have received certificates.
- 3.1.13 The clinic runs an uninterrupted TB programme, and patients collect their chronic medication monthly. Stable chronic care patients are provided with two-month prescriptions, with their medication delivered to a local offsite facility to alleviate pressure from the clinic.

### 3.2 Challenges reported during the visit to the Merweville Clinic

- 3.2.1 During the visit, the delegation noted that the size of the clinic was small, the waiting area was outside in the shade, and the allied services were offered from a prefabricated structure at the facility due to inadequate space at the clinic.
- 3.2.2 The distance between the community and the clinic and the long travel times to the hospitals in Prince Albert and Beaufort West were identified as challenges.
- 3.2.3 The clinic does not provide all services every day. Specifically, Mondays are reserved for doctor appointments; Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays are designated for baby clinics, TB screening and testing; Thursdays are for clinical nurse practitioner and pharmacist visits.
- 3.2.4 During the festive season in December, it was reported that the doctors did not visit the clinic, as all doctors are required to work in the emergency care (EC) department and handle urgent cases.
- 3.2.5 A challenge was reported in aligning the expectations of the farming community with the available service days, as they expect a 24-hour health facility.
- 3.2.6 The clinic faced difficulties in communicating to farmers which days specific services are available, leading to farm workers frequently visiting the clinic on days when the services they need are not being offered.
- 3.2.7 A high crime rate, particularly during paydays, such as social grant and EPWP payment days, was reported as a challenge. This has an impact on health services as it leads to injuries requiring emergency care.
- 3.2.8 The high teenage pregnancy rate in Merweville was reported to be at 19%, and labour services are only available in Beaufort West, and this was highlighted as a challenge, especially considering the long travel distances involved.
- 3.2.9 The transportation of antenatal patients from the Merweville Clinic to the Beaufort West Hospital presents a significant challenge, primarily due to the considerable distance involved.
- 3.2.10 The maternal mortality rate in the area was considered high due to delays in expectant mothers seeking care at the clinic. Additionally, according to the South African National Maternity Framework, any woman who dies within a year of giving birth (even from causes like car accidents) is recorded as a maternity death.
- 3.2.11 Staff retention at the Merweville Clinic was reported as a significant challenge.
- 3.2.12 The delegation was informed that a bridge in Merweville, owned by the Department of Public Works, is too low and frequently overflows during winter, making it difficult for ambulances and patients to access the clinic.
- 3.2.13 It was mentioned that there is an engineer in the community who is willing to assist with the bridge project and it will involve local workers. This proposal was communicated to the Western Cape Minister of Infrastructure, Mr T Simmers, but no response has been received to date.
- 3.2.14 The clinic doctor provides sick notes to patients, and nurses provide proof of attendance, but these are not always accepted by farmers, making it difficult for farm workers to seek health services from the clinic.

### 3.3 Successes reported at the Merweville Clinic

- 3.3.1 The clinic has implemented an effective appointment system, allowing for five walk-ins on Mondays when the doctor is available and on Thursdays when the clinical nurse practitioner visits the facility, ensuring accessibility for those patients without appointments.
- 3.3.2 The clinic is supported by dedicated staff who consistently provide quality healthcare services to the community.
- 3.3.3 There is strong communication between the enrolled nurse at the clinic and the doctor in Prince Albert, ensuring efficient patient care and follow-up.
- 3.3.4 The HIV positivity rate in Merweville is reported to be very low, reflecting successful health interventions in the area.
- 3.3.5 The clinic has a triage system in place that prioritises patients based on the severity of their medical needs, ensuring that those requiring urgent care are treated first.
- 3.3.6 The clinic benefits from a fully functional Clinic Committee, with members present during the visit, offering valuable input and highlighting some of the challenges faced by the facility, but overall good working relations and positive strides collectively.

#### 3.4 Recommendations

The delegation recommended that:

- 3.4.1 The Department of Public Works should conduct a feasibility study on the low-water bridges leading to Merweville.
- 3.4.2 The Department of Health and Wellness should explore alternative transportation options for transferring patients from the Merweville Clinic during the rainy season.

### 4. Visit to the Merweville Library on Monday 24 February 2025

Mr J Mbanga, Assistant Director for Libraries in the Eden–Karoo District, welcomed the delegation to the Merweville Library.

#### 4.1 Salient points pertaining to the Merweville Library

- 4.1.1 The library serves a predominantly Afrikaans-speaking membership and community at large.
- 4.1.2 There are approximately 163 members, 117 of whom are female. The library also has several non-member users who frequent the library.
- 4.1.3 The book collection includes 3 364 Afrikaans books, 1 777 English books, and only six Xhosa books.
- 4.1.4 The library has three computers for staff and members for internet usage. There is one computer allocated to staff that is sponsored by the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport's Rural Library Connectivity Project.
- 4.1.5 Funding restrictions hinder the expansion of the book collection, as well as other areas that need upgrading. This includes facilities for special needs or differently abled users.
- 4.1.6 The libraries operate on unfunded mandates, which proves to be challenging.
- 4.1.7 The majority of the allocated budget is used for the cost of employment across the district.
- 4.1.8 The library engages with local schools for initiatives to promote reading and to encourage learners to use the library's services.
- 4.1.9 The library is not open on Saturdays and closes at 17:00 on weekdays.
- 4.1.10 The Yeboneer deployment has not been renewed since November 2024. The library expects renewal of the Yeboneer deployment in 2025.

#### 4.2 Recommendations

The delegation recommended that:

- 4.2.1 The Municipal Council must consider extending the Merweville Public Library's opening hours to a Saturday and rescind the current resolution in this regard.
- 4.2.2. The Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport explores collaborations with local schools of the Western Cape Education Department to promote improved use of the Merweville Library.

## **5. Oversight visits to the Merweville Cape Access E-centre on Monday 24 February 2025**

### **5.1 Introduction**

On Monday 24 February 2025, Ms Adams, the Manager of the Merweville E-centre, welcomed the delegation. Mr Jeffrey Saul, the Assistant Administrator of the E-centre, delivered a presentation highlighting the history, services, challenges and success stories of the Merweville E-centre. The E-centre provides digital access and training to Merweville's community of approximately 5 000 citizens.

### **5.2 Salient points pertaining to the Merweville E-centre**

#### **5.2.1 History of Merweville and the E-centre**

Merweville was established in 1904 on the farm Vanderbylskraal and was named after Reverend P van der Merwe, a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. The E-centre was opened on 17 February 2017, replacing the former post office, which served as a hub for telegrams, money savings and telephone bill payments. The E-centre is located at 44 Voortrekker Street, Merweville, and serves as a vital resource for the community, particularly in providing access to digital services and training.

#### **5.2.2 Services rendered at the E-centre**

- 5.2.2.1 Citizens can access computers and the internet for 45 minutes per session.
- 5.2.2.2 Staff assist with setting up email accounts, online job searches and university applications.
- 5.2.2.3 The E-centre provides access to government information and services.
- 5.2.2.4 The E-centre offers informal basic training, e-learner programme, and ICDL (International Computer Driving Licence) accredited training. Graduations are held to celebrate the achievements of trainees, with the first graduation taking place in October 2018.
- 5.2.2.5 The E-centre engages in community marketing and school marketing, and participates in events such as Youth Day, fun walks and Public Service Month.

### **5.3 Success stories**

- 5.3.1 Maxine Koopman: A former E-centre user who matriculated in 2018 and used the E-centre to apply for university. She completed her studies at the University of the Western Cape in 2022 and is now an educator at the George Fredericks Primary School.
- 5.3.2 Gradwill Ben: Former Centre Administrator who used the E-centre's resources to apply for a position at the Department of Social Development, where he now works.

- 5.3.3 Anquenic Devenish: Started as a First Work Experience PAY Programme intern at the E-centre and used the resources to apply for a community worker position at the Foundation for Alcohol-related Research where she is now employed.
- 5.3.4 Cederick Minnies: Used the E-centre to apply for the Chrysalis Academy, graduated, and is now working in law enforcement in Beaufort West.

#### 5.4 Partnerships

The E-centre has established partnerships with various organisations, namely Right to Care, the Matzikama Municipality, the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport (DCAS) and the Community Networking and Development Centre (CNDC).

#### 5.5 Challenges faced by the Merweville E-centre

##### 5.5.1 Distance from the community

The E-centre is located far from most of the community, particularly those living beyond the river. During the rainy season, the river becomes impassable, making it difficult for residents to access the E-centre.

##### 5.5.2 Limited resources

The E-centre faces challenges in meeting the high demand for its services, particularly in terms of space and resources for training programmes.

##### 5.5.3 Accessibility

The E-centre's location and the natural barriers (such as the river) limit the number of people who can access its services, particularly during adverse weather conditions.

#### 5.6 Information requested by the delegation

The delegation requested the following information from the Department of the Premier:

- 5.6.1 A detailed breakdown of the costs associated with sustaining the Merweville E-centre.
- 5.6.2 A copy of the service level agreement (SLA) between the Department of the Premier and the local municipality.
- 5.6.3 A plan of action to address the challenges of limited space and accessibility, including potential relocation or expansion of the E-centre to serve the community better.
- 5.6.4 A report on how the location of e-centres is determined, particularly in relation to community needs and accessibility.
- 5.6.5 A proposal to investigate the introduction of advanced training programmes at e-centres.
- 5.6.6 These programmes should focus on equipping the youth with in-demand digital and technical skills, enhancing their competitiveness in the job market and creating better opportunities for employment and economic growth.

### 6. Oversight visit to the Merweville Primary School on Monday 24 February 2025

Mr TF Bruwer, the Principal of the school, received and briefed the delegation.

#### 6.1 Key aspects pertaining to the visit

Mr TF Bruwer briefed the delegation on the background and the basic functionality of the school. He reported that:

- 6.1.1. The vision of the school is to instil responsibility, pride, self-confidence and integrity in learners for their future, while the mission is to encourage enthusiasm in all role players.
- 6.1.2. The hostel and school infrastructure projects, started in January 2023 and March 2023 respectively, are still incomplete due to the contractor's disappearance. This poor workmanship has left these projects with minor defects, incomplete plumbing and electrical installations, and unfinished gutter and roof fittings. The school reported that the asbestos removal was not completed.
- 6.1.3. The school's sports programme offers various activities, including art, Riel dance, sports, open share, mathematics and homework, focusing on artistic expression, traditional Riel dance performances, athletics, tennis, pickleball and planning, with the focus on completing assignments and reinforcing learning.
- 6.1.4. Due to dwindling learner numbers, hostels and school staff are occupied, and two educators teach 32 learners in a multigrade class, posing challenges such as absenteeism, emergencies and training needs.
- 6.1.5. The National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) provides breakfast and lunch to approximately 70% of learners (around 20 learners).
- 6.1.6. Donor funding for infrastructure and amenities includes a solar solution for electricity, a borehole for water supply, a jungle gym and an application for a food garden submitted to the Department of Agriculture.
- 6.1.7. School safety measures include low fences and manageable entry controls, with potential future measures including alarm systems, camera surveillance and security lights.
- 6.1.8. The school is dealing with challenges of dwindling learner numbers, high electricity and water costs, distance and travel issues, sports-related challenges and encouraging parent involvement.
- 6.1.9. They have successfully installed a jungle gym, ensured the availability of Wi-Fi, created a child-friendly environment, organised successful school camps, conducted an ongoing research project, developed a garlic garden, planted olive trees and participated in the Lamb and Olive Festival.
- 6.1.10. Future plans include serving as an alternative for neighbouring schools, alleviating pressure on Beaufort West schools and hostels, sharing resources with other institutions and initiating self-sustaining projects.
- 6.1.11. The school courts are in bad shape, and there are ongoing attempts to improve them.
- 6.1.12. The school is attempting to implement gardening and agricultural initiatives, but support and collaboration are required from the Department of Agriculture and the WCED. Mr NA Claassen briefed the delegation on the George Fredericks Primary School.
- 6.1.13. The vision of the school is to equip learners with responsibility, pride, self-confidence and integrity for their future. Their mission is that all role players must perform their respective functions with enthusiasm.
- 6.1.14. The school's 2025/26 maintenance plan includes WCED-funded projects for asbestos structure repair, iron roof sheet repair, classroom door installation, security gate fitting and maintenance budget projects for classroom painting and building lighting fixation.
- 6.1.15. The school has an active Mass Participation, Opportunity and Access, and Development and Growth Centre (MOD Centre). Other access programmes offer staff development activities, arts and culture initiatives, fundraising initiatives and sports, such as athletics, chess, and netball among others, as well as extracurricular activities for stress reduction and motivation.

- 6.1.16. The school's staff comprises a principal, head of department, level one teachers, a Grade R practitioner, a general foreman, a general assistant, a head chef, an assistant chef and an administrative clerk.
- 6.1.17. The School Nutrition Programme offers two nutritious meals daily, including seasonal fruit and milk, to encourage healthy eating habits.
- 6.1.18. There are 179 learners, with a teacher–learner ratio of 1:18.
- 6.1.19. The school is guided by safety policies and legislation. This includes management of violence, incidents, vandalism and burglary. The school has established good relations with local police and community involvement to ensure the safety of learners and staff.
- 6.1.20. The George Fredericks Primary school experienced challenges of multi-grade classes, poor parent involvement, non-compliant contractors and a lack of funds for projects.
- 6.1.21. Their successes include, among other things, junior training traffic centres, curriculum differentiation, uniform provision, dedicated teachers, regional chess participation, an active Facebook page and collaboration on activism campaigns.
- 6.1.22. There has been an informal discussion with the Eden and Central Karoo Education District on the possibility of merging the Merweville Primary School and the George Fredericks Primary School.

## 6.2 Recommendation

The delegation recommended that the WCED should investigate the ongoing infrastructure issues at the Merweville Primary School, focusing on why projects are started but not completed. The Department must also review and ensure proper contract management at schools.

## 6.3 Information requested

The delegation requested the WCED to provide clarity regarding the potential merger of the two schools, including detailed plans for facilitating the merger.

## 7. Visit to the Beaufort West District Hospital on Tuesday 25 February 2025

On Tuesday 25 February 2025, the Cluster A delegation conducted a visit to the Beaufort West District Hospital. The purpose of the visit was to assess the healthcare services provided, engage with hospital management, review ongoing projects and evaluate service delivery standards at the facility. In addition, the delegation also wanted to gain insight into the challenges faced by the hospital, identify areas for improvement and offer support or intervention where necessary. On arrival, Dr B Muller, the Medical Manager at Beaufort West Hospital, and the senior management from the Central Karoo Health District welcomed the delegation and took them on the walkabout of the facility, followed by a comprehensive briefing on the services offered at the Beaufort West District Hospital.

### 7.1 Salient points on the visit to the Beaufort West District Hospital

- 7.1.1. The Beaufort West Hospital is a district hospital with a 57-bed capacity.
- 7.1.2. The hospital provides high-quality healthcare services to the population in the Central Karoo Health District, ensuring comprehensive and accessible medical care.
- 7.1.3. It was reported that the Beaufort West District Hospital was one of the oldest hospitals in South Africa, established in 1847. It has a rich history and has served the community for over a century and a half.
- 7.1.4. The hospital has digital X-ray for radiation services and has witnessed significant changes in medical practices and technology over the years, reflecting the evolution of healthcare in the region.



- 7.1.5. The hospital serves approximately 78 020 people in a health district and supports primary healthcare with a district hospital package of care on a 24-hour basis.
- 7.1.6. It was reported that the Beaufort West District Hospital is a referral hospital for most of the northern and eastern part of the district, and some of the patients are from the hospitals of the southern and western part of the district.
- 7.1.7. Out of the total population served, 52 751 were from Beaufort West, 15 421 were from Prince Albert, 9 848 were from Laingsburg, and other patients were from outside the Western Cape.
- 7.1.8. The hospital had a total of 181 staff members, namely doctors, nursing staff, allied health professionals, pharmacy staff, administration staff, cleaners, workshop personnel, people management practitioners, support staff and managers.
- 7.1.9. The Beaufort West District Hospital offers a range of health services, including emergency services, general surgery, gynaecology, internal medicine, obstetrics, paediatrics, orthopaedic surgery and allied health services, alongside various outreach programmes.
- 7.1.10. As part of the Western Cape Health Department's network, the hospital is committed to providing high-quality healthcare to both in-patients and out-patients.
- 7.1.11. The hospital plays a vital role in ensuring access to essential medical services in the region, with a strong focus on medical excellence and community health.
- 7.1.12. Despite its location in a relatively remote area, the hospital is renowned for its outreach programmes. These programmes aim to deliver healthcare services to underserved communities in surrounding areas. Through mobile clinics, community health education initiatives and partnerships with local organisations, the hospital extended its reach beyond its immediate vicinity.
- 7.1.13. The hospital has implemented several environmental sustainability initiatives, such as installing solar panels to harness renewable energy, implementing water-saving measures and adopting eco-friendly waste management practices. These efforts contribute to environmental conservation while demonstrating the hospital's commitment to responsible citizenship and the well-being of the community.
- 7.1.14. During the walkabout of the facility, the delegation visited several departments, including the emergency care centre with 18 beds, the maternity ward with 14 beds, the surgical theatre, outpatient facilities and the pharmacy.
- 7.1.15. The hospital appeared well-maintained, though there were signs of strain on key resources, such as hospital beds and staffing levels.
- 7.1.16. It was reported that the hospital had four palliative wards operated by the Right to Care NGO, which provides holistic care to patients with life-threatening illnesses, focusing on pain relief and suffering prevention for both patients and their families.
- 7.1.17. Sister N Tsengiwe, the Operational Manager for the maternity ward, informed the delegation that the Beaufort West District Hospital was the only healthcare facility in the entire Karoo offering 24-hour services.
- 7.1.18. Inadequate bed space and staff shortages were identified as significant challenges in the maternity ward.
- 7.1.19. The maternity ward serves 30 to 70 patients per month.
- 7.1.20. Due to the shortage of space, staff and the different services offered by different categories of hospitals, some patients from the Beaufort West District Hospital are referred to the George Hospital. However, during the rainy season, ambulances often face challenges navigating the mountainous terrain, necessitating the use of AMS helicopters for patient transportation. While this approach ensures access to critical medical care, it is a costly solution. The Department's commitment to providing optimal medical treatment is acknowledged and appreciated.
- 7.1.21. It was reported that the majority of babies born at the Beaufort West District Hospital is premature, and the hospital provides specialised care for these infants.

- 7.1.22. The maternity ward also managed complicated cases, particularly among farm workers who often delayed seeking medical care during pregnancy.
- 7.1.23. The Beaufort West District Hospital has two well-equipped theatres.
- 7.1.24. The Beaufort West District Hospital personnel requested better collaboration with relevant stakeholders to address the socio-economic challenges in the Central Karoo communities.

## 7.2 Challenges reported during the visit to the Beaufort West District Hospital

- 7.2.1. The high vacancy rate and attracting and retaining qualified staff in Beaufort West were reported to be a significant challenge due to the lack and high cost of suitable and safe accommodation.
- 7.2.2. The hospital has a budget to use agency staff; however, attracting them was reported as a challenge due to the distance.
- 7.2.3. The increasing population, including people from other towns and provinces, such as Eastern Cape and Northern Cape, poses a challenge for the hospital.
- 7.2.4. Inadequate space in the labour ward was reported as a challenge, necessitating additional space.
- 7.2.5. The teenage pregnancy rate in Beaufort West and surrounding areas was reported to be very high, around 20%. Girls as young as 14 years were reported to be giving birth at the Beaufort West District Hospital.
- 7.2.6. Substance abuse, particularly alcohol, drugs and marijuana, was reported as a significant challenge among teenagers in the Central Karoo. This has contributed to a high incidence of babies being born with foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) in the region.
- 7.2.7. The cycle of substance abuse in the Central Karoo perpetuates as mothers with FAS give birth to babies with the same condition.
- 7.2.8. The Central Karoo was reported to have a high HIV prevalence due to socio-economic factors, especially the high unemployment rate, leading to young girls working as prostitutes along the N1.
- 7.2.9. A high unemployment rate causes many challenges in the Central Karoo. Young people lack opportunities, and the officials at Beaufort West District Hospital requested job creation in the area.
- 7.2.10. The hospital has a kangaroo care section where some mothers stay for two months after delivering babies weighing less than 2 kg. However, some babies die after being discharged due to socio-economic factors, such as inadequate housing and nutrition in various communities in the Central Karoo.
- 7.2.11. The hospital was experiencing a shortage of medical staff, particularly in specialist fields. This has led to a heavy workload for existing staff and delays in care.
- 7.2.12. A shortage of staff in the emergency centre was reported as a challenge. The EC has four staff members and serves 1 400 to 1 800 patients per month. When one staff member goes on leave, the remaining staff face increased pressure.
- 7.2.13. An increase in psychiatric patients was reported as a challenge. The hospital lacks dedicated psychiatric wards, leading to psychiatric patients being admitted to general wards, posing a danger to other patients and staff.
- 7.2.14. Psychiatric patients often remain in the hospital beyond the 72-hour assessment period mandated by the Mental Health Care Act, 2002 (Act 17 of 2002), due to challenges in the referral hospital.
- 7.2.15. The referral hospital for psychiatric and TB patients from the Beaufort West District Hospital was reported to be the Nelspoort Provincial Hospital.
- 7.2.16. While the hospital had made efforts to maintain and upgrade its facilities, there were still critical areas in need of expansion.
- 7.2.17. Outdated infrastructure hinders efficient patient flow. Delays in the infrastructure project by the Department of Public Works cause major challenges. The renovation

project has been postponed for a long time, and the hospital management anticipated that the project would be completed by 2028 if it starts in 2025.

- 7.2.18. The delegation noted that the Central Karoo is facing a rising burden of disease that puts pressure on the Beaufort West District Hospital.
- 7.2.19. Most children in the Central Karoo are not registered at the Department of Home Affairs because their mothers lack identity documents (IDs). This absence of documentation also hinders the mothers from registering their children for the Sassa Child Grant.
- 7.2.20. Budget constraints were reported by officials who highlighted that the national model for funding allocation to the Department presents a significant challenge. Funds for health facilities are allocated based solely on headcount, without taking into account other important factors that affect health services in rural areas, such as distances and socio-economic conditions.
- 7.2.21. Furthermore, the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) at municipal level, which are intended to facilitate effective service delivery, are not functioning effectively. In Beaufort West, the existing structure is not fully operational and fails to influence municipal planning adequately.
- 7.2.22. The hospital lacks a fully functional Hospital Board due to the community's lack of interest. Community members reportedly expect compensation, yet there is none for board members.

### 7.3 Successes noted and reported during the visit to the Beaufort West District Hospital

Some of the successes that were noted and reported during the visit to the Beaufort West District Hospital included:

- 7.3.1. The HIV positivity rate in the district was reported to be very low.
- 7.3.2. There was a strong sense of teamwork among dedicated staff members.
- 7.3.3. Staff members exemplify the values of the Department and make the most of their available resources.
- 7.3.4. The hospital has achieved good outcomes, developed effective systems and provided leadership training, which were recognised as significant successes.
- 7.3.5. The delegation noted and praised the positive attitude of the staff and the cleanliness of the hospital.

### 7.4 Recommendation

The delegation recommended that:

- 7.4.1. The Beaufort West District Hospital should consider the possibility of collaborating with the local government to fill the vacant positions on the Hospital Facility Board and supplement stipends from ward budgets for these board members.
- 7.4.2. The Department of Health and Wellness should reassess the categorisation of hospitals across the province, ensuring alignment with the range of services provided. This review is crucial to address the systemic challenges currently faced by district hospitals.

### 7.5 Request for information

The delegation requested the Department of Health and Wellness to submit the following information by Monday 5 May 2025:

- 7.5.1. Detailed information on the strategies in place by the Department of Health and Wellness to address foetal alcohol syndrome in the Central Karoo.

- 7.5.2. Comprehensive information on the strategies adopted by the Department of Health and Wellness to tackle the high teenage pregnancy rates in the Central Karoo, including any intersectoral approaches currently in place.
- 7.5.3. Detailed information on the interventions established by the Department of Health and Wellness to address the issue of unregistered adults and newborns in the Central Karoo.

## **8. Visit to the Karoo Outreach Project, a soup kitchen in Beaufort West**

The founders of the soup kitchen, Mr A Lionel and Mr MA Adams, welcomed the delegation. Mr MA Adams proceeded to brief the delegation on the operations of the Karoo Outreach Project in Beaufort West.

- 8.1 Key findings that emanated from the visit
  - 8.1.1. The Karoo Outreach Project, launched in 2017 and registered as a non-profit organisation (NPO), focuses on alleviating poverty in the Central Karoo region by providing meals to vulnerable community members.
  - 8.1.2. The Central Karoo faces significant socio-economic challenges, including high unemployment and food insecurity. The unemployment rate in the region is estimated to be over 90%.
  - 8.1.3. The Karoo Outreach Project was established to address these challenges, with support from the Department of Social Development (DSD) under the Sustainable Livelihoods Programme.
  - 8.1.4. This initiative promotes social inclusion and poverty alleviation by providing targeted, temporary feeding to vulnerable individuals and facilitating access to essential government services.
  - 8.1.5. The DSD began funding the Karoo Outreach Project in 2020, designating it as a Community Nutrition and Development Centre (CNDC). However, the CNDC classification has a limited scope, which has posed challenges for the NPO in scaling its operations.
  - 8.1.6. In 2020, the project was also recognised as a strategic partner for the DSD's Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, aimed at mitigating the impact of COVID-19, which worsened food insecurity for many households.
  - 8.1.7. Initially, the plan was to provide meals five days a week, but due to overwhelming demand and limited funding, the NPO currently serves meals three days a week.
  - 8.1.8. The meals offered include hearty and nutritious options, such as stews, pasta, chicken casserole, rice, soya, mixed vegetables and more. However, with food inflation rising by 70% since the project's inception, additional funding is needed to maintain and expand these services.
  - 8.1.9. The Karoo Outreach Project currently serves over 1 000 adults and children across 14 feeding sites in Beaufort West.
  - 8.1.10. Despite the high demand, the NPO has expanded its reach to areas such as Graceland, Laingsburg, Merweville, Leeu-Gamka and Murraysburg, providing meals to over 500 people per day in some areas.
  - 8.1.11. The NPO operates with a staff of 36, including cooks, project managers, administrators and other support staff. Data on beneficiaries is systematically captured on-site using spreadsheets.
  - 8.1.12. For the 2024/25 financial year, R107 695 700 in funding has been allocated to the Karoo Outreach Project by the Department of Social Development.
  - 8.1.13. Additionally, the NPO has expanded its focus to include skills development and curriculum development, aiming to enhance employability in the region.
  - 8.1.14. The Central Karoo faces several challenges, including extreme poverty, high unemployment, substance abuse and a high number of child-headed households.

- 8.1.15. The growing demand for the Karoo Outreach Project's services has led to a call for increased funding and the acquisition of suitable vehicles to ensure effective meal distribution in the region.
- 8.1.16. Mr Adams, a key figure in the project, informed the delegation that the Karoo Outreach Project can expand across the province if lawmakers advocate for its inclusion in policy formulation.
- 8.1.17. He also reported that the DSD's prescribed funding rate of R8,50 per person is insufficient to meet the demand. In response, the Karoo Outreach Project is partnering with a food manufacturer in Somerset West to produce affordable and nutritious food packs called "food socks".
- 8.1.18. These food socks, which can feed a family of four, will be introduced to various communities with the added goal of allowing beneficiaries to sell them locally, generating income for their families.
- 8.1.19. DSD officials who were present at the meeting reported that the Sustainable Livelihoods Programme's strategic objective is to manage social facilitation and poverty alleviation for sustainable livelihoods.
- 8.1.20. The programme collaborates with NPOs, such as the Karoo Outreach Project, to ensure the achievement of its goals, including providing funding for community nutrition and development centres (CNDCs) and community-based kitchens (CBOs), which function as community soup kitchens.
- 8.1.21. DSD officials noted that CNDCs provide food relief to registered beneficiaries five days a week, reaching over 10 000 individuals per month, while CBOs provide food relief three to four days a week, serving over 9 000 beneficiaries, with 80% of them being women with children under the age of seven.
- 8.1.22. Meals at CNDCs are quality-assured in partnership with the Department of Health and Wellness by creating a prescribed and standardised meal plan.
- 8.1.23. Limited funding restricts meal services to only two days a week instead of the desired five.
- 8.1.24. The difficulty of securing long-term sponsorships and food donations was reported as a challenge.
- 8.1.25. The delegation noted that while the Karoo Outreach Project has made significant strides in addressing food insecurity in the region, and ongoing challenges require further support and investment to scale and sustain its impact on the Central Karoo's most vulnerable populations.
- 8.1.26. The delegation was very impressed with what they saw at the Karoo Outreach Project. The management of the facility, the quality of food provided and the entire business model of the Karoo Outreach Project were remarkable.

## 8.2 Recommendations

The delegation recommended that the Karoo Outreach Project should:

- 8.2.1. Engage businesses, supermarkets and agricultural partners for sustainable food donations.
- 8.2.2. Advocate for municipal and provincial funding support.
- 8.2.3. Encourage volunteer participation from schools and community groups.
- 8.2.4. Explore partnerships for food gardens and long-term financial sustainability.
- 8.2.5. Engage the Department on extending this success story to other rural areas in the province based on the same concept and funding support.

## 9. Beaufort West South African Police Service, Tuesday 25 February 2025

The delegation was welcomed by the station commander, Col AB Zimba.

## 9.1 Salient points pertaining to the Beaufort West South African Police Service

- 9.1.1 The station reported 91 domestic cases in the first two quarters of 2024/25, with 230 domestic violence incidents reported at the station.
- 9.1.2 There were 100 drug-related cases reported. The station utilises the flying squad and regular vehicle checkpoint operations to clamp down on the transport of illegal drugs along the N1 corridor.
- 9.1.3 The station reported that there are no organised gang structures in the Beaufort West district nor any reported gang-related extortion cases.
- 9.1.4 The liquor trade has a marked impact as a crime driver, in particular assault cases. Other key drivers include the high unemployment rate and the marked increase in the number of street youths.
- 9.1.5 The SAPS data shows the effects of the liquor trade on foetal alcohol syndrome rates and adolescent pregnancy rates.
- 9.1.6 The illegal liquor trade is addressed partly by using section 252A of the Criminal Procedure Act, 1996 (Act 85 of 1996), to conduct crime intelligence-led undercover operations to arrest perpetrators.
- 9.1.7 The station has 14 assigned volunteers to assist with the victim-friendly room. These volunteers are, however, not trained.
- 9.1.8 The vehicle fleet records across the three units reflect that visible policing (VISPOL) has 30 allocated vehicles. Six vehicles are under repair and maintenance, and two have been boarded. This leaves 22 functioning vehicles. Col Zimba informed the delegation that the station requires seven more VISPOL vehicles. The detection service has 13 allocated vehicles, four of which are under repair and maintenance, with one vehicle boarded. This leaves seven functioning vehicles and the station requiring seven more vehicles for this unit. In terms of support unit vehicles, there are two allocated, one of which has been boarded, leaving just a single functional vehicle. Col Zimba indicated that at least one more vehicle is required for this unit.
- 9.1.9 The station has 188 staff, with 124 allocated to the VISPOL unit, 31 to crime detection, and 33 support staff. The number of granted posts was not indicated.
- 9.1.10 The delegation noted that the station personnel, led by Col Zimba, appeared unprepared to present. The delegation drew connections to other visits in the district where the effects of crime on other social spheres were reported. For example, the SAPS did not present data corresponding to local hospital figures on foetal alcohol syndrome rates and adolescent pregnancies. Another example is the downplay of the drug trade vis-à-vis reported medical cases for drug abuse at other social bodies such as local hospitals, clinics and the local community.
- 9.1.11 The delegation identified serious concerns regarding the operations, credibility of statistics, accountability and service delivery of the Beaufort West Police Station. The delegation raised concerns about leadership and transparency at the station and the SAPS's responsiveness to community needs.
- 9.1.12 The delegation noted, through interactions at other sites visited, that residents reported inadequate policing, with a focus on highway searches over local crime issues.
- 9.1.13 The SAPS reported that prosecutors have shown patterns of not following through with cases brought against criminals. The SAPS reported that prosecution services exhibit a disconnect in respect of finalising cases.

## 9.2 Recommendations

The delegation recommended that the Office of the Western Cape Police Commissioner should:

- 9.2.1 Conduct an internal review of the Beaufort West SAPS station's leadership and operations.
- 9.2.2 Ensure that the Beaufort West SAPS station prioritises drug and gang-related crime in the area.
- 9.2.3 Improve the data collection and verification methods to record crime statistics.
- 9.2.4 Review the Beaufort West's vehicle fleet management, including the allocation of sufficient and functional vehicles across the directorates.

The delegation recommended that the Department of Police Oversight and Community Safety should:

- 9.2.5 Investigate extending its Court Watching Brief to the Beaufort West Municipality. This is especially due to the reported irregular prosecution services at the local courts.
- 9.2.6 Investigate building capacity and training for victim support volunteers at the Beaufort West SAPS. The SAPS reported that its 14 volunteers are not formally trained in matters of victim support.
- 9.2.7 Investigate the quality and performance of community police forums and neighbourhood watches in Beaufort West.
- 9.2.8 Utilise the Capacity Maturity Matrix to also focus on the state of maintenance of SAPS stations, such as the Beaufort West SAPS.

## **10. Oversight visit to the Broadband Site at Beaufort West Library on Tuesday 25 February 2025**

### **10.1 Introduction**

The Broadband Site located inside the Beaufort West Library is part of the broader initiative of the Western Cape Government (WCG) to provide high-speed internet access and digital services to citizens, particularly in rural and underserved areas. This site is one of the many e-centres established under the WCG's Broadband Programme, which aims to improve digital access, enhance government service delivery and foster economic growth.

The Broadband Site at the Beaufort West Library is a vital community resource, offering digital access and support to residents. Located in the library, it operates during regular hours, ensuring consistent availability. The site provides free public Wi-Fi with sessions lasting up to 45 minutes, enabling residents to connect to the internet. Staff are on hand to assist with tasks, such as setting up email accounts, conducting online job searches and completing university applications. Additionally, the site facilitates access to government services, including applications for social grants, school admissions and business registrations. To further empower the community, the site offers training programme, such as basic digital skills and e-learner courses.

### **10.2 Usage and impact**

As part of the public Wi-Fi initiative of the Western Cape Government (WCG), the site has seen significant usage. By December 2024, the public Wi-Fi network had 4,4 million users, with total data consumption reaching 884,7 TB over six months. On average, users consume 6 GB of data over six months, with peak usage in the evenings and an average connection duration of six minutes. These statistics underscore the growing demand for digital access and the site's role in bridging the digital divide.

### **10.3 Community benefits**

The Broadband Site is a crucial resource for Beaufort West, particularly for residents without home internet access. It simplifies access to government services, reducing the need for in-person visits. Students benefit from access to educational resources and online assignments, while job seekers can search for work and submit applications, boosting local economic opportunities. The site's training programme and workshops also enhance digital literacy.

#### 10.4 Broader impact of broadband connectivity

Broadband connectivity has transformed the Western Cape, improving efficiency, productivity and service delivery. Public Wi-Fi hotspots, available at 1 600 government buildings and schools, have provided free internet to 4,4 million users, with total data usage reaching 884,7 TB over six months. In education, broadband supports e-learning while, in healthcare, it enhances patient care through systems like electronic medical records. Libraries, museums and community centres also benefit by offering digital services, making them hubs for learning and engagement.

#### 10.5 Broadband 1.0 and 2.0 programmes

The Broadband 1.0 Programme, implemented in partnership with Liquid Intelligent Technologies (LIT), successfully connected 2 031 sites, including schools, healthcare facilities, libraries and government offices. It laid 3 000 km of fibre, achieving 82% rural penetration, and provided public Wi-Fi access through hotspots. The WCG acted as an anchor tenant to accelerate infrastructure rollout in underserved areas.

The Broadband 2.0 Programme, launched after Broadband 1.0 Programme ended in October 2024, focuses on improving services, connecting 355 additional sites and ensuring cost-effectiveness. A seven-year contract was signed in November 2024, with implementation starting in March 2025. The Central Karoo District, including Beaufort West, will transition to Broadband 2.0 by August 2025, with new sites expected by the end of 2026.

#### 10.6 Challenges

Despite its successes, the Broadband Site faces challenges, such as space constraints in e-centres, paper shortages, air conditioning issues and a training backlog with 155 people on the waiting list. Safety concerns, including vandalism and theft of infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, also pose significant problems.

#### 10.7 Future plans

The Broadband 2.0 Programme aims to upgrade infrastructure and improve services at sites, such as the Beaufort West Library. Plans include expanding the training programme, adding digital resources and increasing community outreach to raise awareness and encourage more residents to use the available services. These efforts will further bridge the digital divide and enhance access to digital resources across the Western Cape.

### **11. Visit the Huis Johannes Old-age Home in Beaufort West on Tuesday 25 February 2025**

The Social Cluster delegation visited the Huis Johannes Old-age Home in Beaufort West on Tuesday 25 February 2025. Upon arrival, Dr W Terblanche and Mr W Volschenk, Coordinators of Older Persons from Badisa, as well as Mr D de Kerk, the Chairperson of the Board of the Huis Johannes Old-age Home, welcomed the delegation. Additionally, relevant officials from the Department of Social Development accompanied the delegation during the



visit. Dr W Terblanche briefed the delegation on the operations of the NGO, challenges and future plans.

#### 11.1 Key findings that emanated from the visit

- 11.1.1 The Huis Johannes Old-age Home is located in a community that faces extreme poverty and a range of social challenges.
- 11.1.2 The home operates as a programme under Badisa and is registered with the Badisa NPO number.
- 11.1.3 While the home primarily serves the Central Karoo region, it also accepts applications from across the country, with the furthest application coming from Kroonstad.
- 11.1.4 The Department of Social Development subsidises 64 beds for residents in need of care.
- 11.1.5 The services provided align with the Norms and Standards set out in the Older Persons Act, 2006 (Act 13 of 2006).
- 11.1.6 It was reported that Badisa's head office manages a centralised waiting list for all its facilities.
- 11.1.7 The Governing Board of the Huis Johannes Old-age Home was appointed by the Management Board of Badisa after receiving nominations from both the manager and the community.
- 11.1.8 According to Badisa's constitution, the Governing Board is appointed every three years, with the current board having been appointed in April 2024.
- 11.1.9 The board consists of seven members who represent both the residents and the broader community.
- 11.1.10 It was reported that the board was responsible for managing the home's programmes in accordance with Badisa's policies and guidelines, ensuring that the services remain responsive to the needs of all stakeholders. This includes developing strategies and turnaround plans as necessary.
- 11.1.11 The home currently employs 36 staff members, which was reported as insufficient given the required staff complement of 53.
- 11.1.12 To meet the minimum norms and standards, the home needs to hire four enrolled nurses and seventeen carers. This would bring the staffing ratio in line with the required 1:6 ratio for the day shift and a 1:9 ratio for the night shifts.
- 11.1.13 To address these staffing shortages, a total of R2 044 265 per annum is needed. This includes R1 865 522 to fill the vacancies and R178 740 per annum to meet the minimum wage requirements.
- 11.1.14 The delegation was informed that the home's operational cost was managed at the lowest possible level, with R4,4 million reported in the 2024 audited financial statements.
- 11.1.15 It was further reported that the average annual increase in operational expenses over the past eight years was 5,7%.

#### 11.2 Challenges reported at the Huis Johannes Old-age Home

- 11.2.1 A shortage of funding due to the funding model was identified as a major challenge at Huis Johannes in Beaufort West.
- 11.2.2 The delegation was informed that operational costs are projected to be R4,4 million in 2024, while lodging fees are estimated to generate around R1,4 million, and residents can only contribute 90 per cent of their Sassa grant toward these fees.
- 11.2.3 It was reported that the DSD subsidy for the home was R2,3 million, leaving a R200 000 gap in total operational costs, excluding reserve funds for maintenance. This shortfall needs to be filled through donations and fundraising, which has been reported as challenging in the Central Karoo.

- 11.2.4 Due to cash flow pressures, maintaining the old-age home has been deemed impossible.
  - 11.2.5 Staff shortage, especially in critical positions, was also highlighted as a significant challenge.
  - 11.2.6 These staff shortages make it difficult for the Huis Johannes Old-age Home to adhere to the minimum norms and standards outlined in the Older Persons Act, 2006 (Act 13 of 2006).
  - 11.2.7 As the core income primarily from the DSD subsidy and Sassa does not grow at the same rate as operational costs, it was mentioned that the cash flow was at risk, and this made it impossible to implement the required norms and standards.
  - 11.2.8 Recruiting professional registered enrolled nurses and enrolled assistant nurses from the community has proven difficult due to their salary expectations and the prevailing funding shortages.
  - 11.2.9 Providing annual salary increases and bonuses for staff has also been reported as a challenge.
  - 11.2.10 Budget constraints impact service delivery, including stagnant staff salaries over the past six years.
  - 11.2.11 The NGO reported that it was struggling to adjust staff salaries, with current employees earning below the minimum wage.
  - 11.2.12 Training staff, particularly caregivers who require formal training, has been reported as another challenge due to inadequate funding.
  - 11.2.13 The affordability of staff uniforms was also raised as an issue during the visit.
  - 11.2.14 The broken industrial washing machine and the lack of a tumble dryer compromise hygiene.
- 11.3 Progress report on the turnaround strategy of the facility following the committee visit in 2023
- 11.3.1 The delegation was informed that the Standing Committee on Social Development's recommendations following the 2023 visit to the NGO were considered and implemented, and progress has been made to turn around the situation at the Huis Johannes Old-age Home.
  - 11.3.2 It was reported that meetings were held with the board members to identify and prioritise urgent maintenance and other critical needs.
  - 11.3.3 The Badisa regional office provided guidance and assistance regarding compliance with the minimum norms and standards, and the availability of funds to address these challenges in the nursing care unit remains a challenge.
  - 11.3.4 In addition, Badisa conducted an assessment of the NGO finances, and a report was produced and discussed with Dr Macdonald, the Head of the Department of Social Development, to request assistance.
  - 11.3.5 An action plan was also developed to address these issues, but funding remains a challenge.
  - 11.3.6 As part of the turnaround strategy, the management of the NGO has been actively engaging with various stakeholders and family members in the Beaufort West community to involve them in the NGO's activities, to raise awareness about the financial challenges and to request donations and support.
  - 11.3.7 Due to the efforts made, 60 mattresses and mattress covers from the local United Reformed Church's women and women in the community were received.
  - 11.3.8 A donation of beds and bedside drawers was also received from the local provincial hospital.
  - 11.3.9 Donations of R25 740 were received from the community, and a single donation of R7 000 was also received, and bedding for the residents was purchased from these donations.

- 11.3.10 The delegation was informed that the CEO of Badisa approached the Badisa management to request financial assistance for the Huis Johannes Old-age Home, and an amount of R80 500 was made available.
- 11.3.11 The Badisa management also engaged in discussions with the Head of the Department of Social Development and the Chief Director for the Older Persons Programme about the NGO's challenges and its long-term financial sustainability. This resulted in DSD providing relief funds to Badisa to support its NGOs in distress.
- 11.3.12 From these funds, an amount of R650 000 was allocated to the Huis Johannes Old-age Home for operational expenses, aiding in future cost savings and supporting the NGO's turnaround strategy.
- 11.3.13 In addition, R150 000 was allocated to Huis Johannes in November 2024 for staff bonuses.
- 11.3.14 It was reported that an infection protocol was established for managing used consumables, and specific sealed bins were purchased to dispose of used diapers until they were collected by the municipality.
- 11.3.15 In addition, an agreement was reached with the local municipality for the removal of these consumables twice a week.
- 11.3.16 The delegation was informed that a way forward on the turnaround of the Huis Johannes Old-age Home was underway, and this included restructuring and appointing staff to comply with the minimum norms and standards. This can only be achieved if sustainable funding is secured to appoint the necessary nursing staff to comply with the staff ratios.
- 11.3.17 Ongoing fundraising efforts according to a fundraising plan were underway, and meetings and engagements with leaders and community members to request financial support were also underway.
- 11.3.18 The delegation noted the change in management and welcomed the improvements done at the Huis Johannes Old-age Home.

#### 11.4 Resolutions

The delegation resolved that the Standing Committee on Social Development should:

- 11.4.1 Conduct a follow-up visit to track progress in the operations of the NGO and support ongoing efforts.
- 11.4.2 Schedule an engagement with older persons' stakeholder organisations and the Department of Social Development on their collaboration and support in the province.

#### 11.5 Recommendations

The delegation recommended that:

- 11.5.1 The NGO should prioritise the allocation of funds for essential infrastructure maintenance, including tasks such as tiling repairs and air conditioning upkeep.
- 11.5.2 The NGO should repair its washing machine and consider purchasing a tumble dryer to address the laundry challenge, especially during the rainy season.
- 11.5.3 The NGO must guarantee that all residents receive three balanced meals daily to support their overall health and well-being.
- 11.5.4 The NGO should conduct a review of staff salaries to enhance employee morale and improve staff retention.
- 11.5.5 The NGO should establish a structured collaboration between the management team and the board, ensuring regular oversight reports to strengthen governance and accountability.

- 11.5.6 The Department of Social Development should ensure that residents at the Huis Johannes Old-age Home receive three balanced meals daily with funding support.
- 11.5.7 The Department of Social Development should investigate a new funding model for the NGOs that attract other sources of funding.

## **12. Oversight visit to HM Dlikidla Primary School on Tuesday 25 February 2025**

Mr J Kokwe, the Principal of the school, received and briefed the delegation.

### **12.1 Key aspects pertaining to the visit**

Mr Kokwe briefed the delegation on the background and the basic functionality of the school. He reported that:

- 12.1.1 The vision of the school is to achieve excellence through quality education, producing learners as competent participants for community prosperity.
- 12.1.2 The school, founded by Rev Lekgodu in 1943, was divided into the Beaufort West Primary School and the Mandlenkosi Secondary School in 1987. Its current building was inaugurated in 1989 and features 24 classrooms, a computer laboratory, a library and an administration block.
- 12.1.3 The school is situated in Kwa-Mandlenkosi, a township in Beaufort West. It is a no-fee paying school with most learners relying on social grants, with the main employment centres being garages, restaurants and casual jobs.
- 12.1.4 The school had a total of 791 learners in 2024 and 810 learners in 2025, with staff including principals, deputy principals, departmental heads, teachers, clerks and general assistants.
- 12.1.5 The curriculum consists of Xhosa for Grade R to Grade 3 and English for Grade 4 to Grade 7, with mother-tongue bilingual-based teaching (MTBBT) starting in Grade 4. Class ratios vary per grade, with the foundation phase at 1:18 and the intermediate phase at 1:36.
- 12.1.6 The National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) offers daily meals to 810 learners, including breakfast and lunch, and also provides a vegetable garden for cultivation.
- 12.1.7 The Learner Transport Scheme benefits Hillside, Graceland and Karoo National Park residents with Beaufort West Luxury Coaches and Booysen's Transport offering co-curricular activities.
- 12.1.8 Sports and culture encompass various activities, such as soccer, rugby, netball, athletics, tennis, hockey, music, drama and gumboot dance.
- 12.1.9 The school's infrastructure is well-maintained, but the limited budget has led to financial issues between the main contractor and the subcontractor. This has left most of the work unfinished, with half-finished ablution facilities, half-finished painting and incomplete electrical work. The school is currently without a labelled DB board and no COC for its DB board. The WCED intervened and made all ablution facilities functional, but drainage challenges from the local municipality and collapsed underground sewerage pipes prevent simultaneous use of all facilities. The school's infrastructure is currently unusable due to these issues.
- 12.1.10 The school prioritises safety, given its community location and surrounding houses. They have minimal safety challenges due to their access control system, CCTV cameras, alarm systems installed by Bhobhofolo Security and Safe Schools Holiday Security.
- 12.1.11 The school faces several challenges, including a lack of parental involvement, inadequate sports facilities and a lack of a school hall. This affects the school's ability to host functions internally and host parents' meetings outside due to the harsh Karoo

weather conditions. Additionally, the school is grappling with the issue of early-onset substance abuse among learners.

- 12.1.12 Despite these challenges, the school remains functional and continues to strive for improvement.
- 12.1.13 The 2025 school goals include branding, enhancing curriculum with e-learning, implementing a Grade R outdoor class building project, promoting parental involvement and forming external partnerships.
- 12.1.14 The school governing body (SGB) is functional, has recently adopted a more affordable uniform to address high unemployment and social issues, and is actively seeking donations for those unable to afford it.

## 12.2 Recommendations

The delegation recommended that:

- 12.2.1 The WCED should investigate the issue regarding the infrastructure as most of the work is unfinished, with half-finished ablution facilities, half-finished painting and incomplete electrical work. The WCED must also investigate a possible solution to fixing the drainage challenges from the local municipality and collapsed underground sewerage pipes, which prevents the simultaneous use of all facilities.
- 12.2.2 The curriculum consists of Xhosa for Grade R to Grade 3 and English for Grade 4 to Grade 7, with mother-tongue bilingual-based teaching (MTBBT) starting in Grade 4. Given this, the WCED should ensure that the implementation of mother-tongue education is clearly explained and effectively carried out.
- 12.2.3 The WCED should investigate a solution to improve the school grounds, including seeking assistance from the community and stakeholders.
- 12.2.4 The Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport (DCAS) should investigate how it can assist the school with its school and after-hours programmes.

## 12.3 Information requested

The delegation requested the WCED to provide:

- 12.3.1 The details of the infrastructure project, which started in 2023. The report must include the estimate completion date.
- 12.3.2 The feeding schemes that are in place for rural schools, if there any such schemes in place.
- 12.3.3 With respect to the implementation of mother-tongue education, the Department should submit a report on its strategy in handling diverse learner backgrounds and school intakes.

## 13. Acknowledgement

The delegation thanked the management of the different facilities that were visited for their willingness to share valuable information with the Social Cluster delegation.