

[Friday, 05 June 2026]

[No 9 – 2026] THIRD SESSION, SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

# PARLIAMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF THE WESTERN CAPE

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## QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN REPLY

FRIDAY, 5 JUNE 2026

**Mr B Adams to ask Ms M M Wenger, Minister of Health and Wellness:**

- (1) What is the current availability of ambulances and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) resources in (a) the Garden Route District and (b) George specifically;
- (2) whether her Department has conducted any assessment regarding the adequacy of (a) ambulance numbers, (b) response times, (c) staffing levels and (d) fleet availability in George and the broader Garden Route region over the past three years; if so, what were the findings;
- (3) what measures are currently being implemented or planned by her Department to (a) address ambulance shortages and (b) improve emergency response times in George and the surrounding communities;
- (4) whether her Department has received complaints, concerns or representations from (a) residents, (b) healthcare workers, (c) local government representatives or (d) community organisations regarding ambulance shortages in the Garden Route District; if so, what action has been taken?

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## RESPONSE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

(1)(a) The Garden Route District currently has 28 ambulance vehicles available for use, of which five are currently in the workshop for mechanical repairs or servicing.

Based on current staffing availability, the Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness is able to staff a minimum of 17 ambulances per day and night shift in the Garden Route District.

Operational resources are deployed dynamically based on service demand and may be reassigned between stations where required to support optimal patient care and emergency response coverage. This means that there might be more than 17 ambulances deployed at any given time.

In addition to the ambulances, HealthNET - the department's non-emergency patient transport service – has five 22-seater vehicles and three 13-seater vehicles. On any given day, there will be seven HealthNET vehicles available for use and these vehicles can be converted for stretcher or wheelchair transport.

There are also five fully equipped medical and response vehicles in the district and each of these will have at least one intermediate life support responder on board. These vehicles respond mainly to rescue scenarios but can also respond to other emergencies on an ad hoc basis.

(1)(b) Within these available resources, three ambulances are rostered in George on each day and night shift to provide emergency medical services to George and the surrounding catchment area. However, due to the dynamic deployment of resources more than three may be in use.

(2)(a) Yes. The Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness continuously monitors the adequacy of ambulance numbers through routine operational performance reviews and service planning processes.

Over the past three years, these assessments have indicated increasing demand for emergency medical services across George and the broader Garden Route District, amongst others. Long travel distances, seasonal population increases and high operational demand continue to place pressure on available ambulance resources.

(2)(b) Yes. Response time performance is continuously monitored through provincial performance management systems.

The findings over the past three years indicate that response times are affected by increasing service demand, long travel distances, seasonal population increases, hospital offload delays and the availability of staffed operational resources.

(2)(c) Yes. Staffing levels are continually reviewed to optimise resource deployment across the district.

The findings indicate that staffing constraints affect the number of ambulances that can be staffed per shift. The Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness is limited to the filling of posts based on approved post levels.

(2)(d) Yes. Fleet availability is actively monitored through preventative maintenance programmes and vehicle replacement initiatives.

The findings indicate that 23 of the 28 available ambulances in the Garden Route District are currently operational and available for deployment. Fleet availability remains an

important focus area, with ongoing maintenance and replacement processes aimed at maximising operational readiness. An important consideration is not only the physical fleet, but sufficient qualified personnel to man the fleet.

(3)(a) The Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness is implementing the following measures to address ambulance availability in George and the surrounding communities:

- continuous review and optimisation of ambulance deployment based on operational demand;
- dynamic deployment of resources across the district according to service demand;
- fleet replacement and maintenance programmes to maximise vehicle availability; and
- ongoing recruitment and staffing processes where vacancies exist, subject to available posts and budget.

The Department has also contracted one private service provider to assist with inter-facility transfers (IFT) in the district. Since 1 April to the latest available date, a total of 238 IFTs have been undertaken by the service provider, freeing up ambulances to attend to emergencies.

(3)(b) The Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness is implementing the following measures to improve emergency response times in George and the surrounding communities:

- continuous monitoring of response time performance through provincial performance management systems;
- operational deployment of available ambulances according to demand and priority;
- reassignment of resources between stations where required to support emergency response coverage; and
- collaboration with healthcare facilities to reduce hospital turnaround times and return ambulances to operational service as quickly as possible.

(4)(a)(b)(c) and (d) Yes. The Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness has received concerns regarding ambulance availability within the Garden Route District.

These concerns are managed through established complaints management and operational governance processes. Each matter is assessed through a review of dispatch records, response performance and operational resource availability. Where appropriate, operational adjustments are implemented.

The Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness continues to engage with stakeholders and monitor service delivery performance to support continuous improvement within the available resource envelope.

**MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

**DATE**