

2023: The fierce urgency of now

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Members of the Western Cape Cabinet,
Honourable Leader of the Opposition,
Honourable Members of the House,
Special guests present here today,
Members of the Media,
People of the Western Cape,

It is my honour to present to you the 2023 State of the Province Address. It is good to be back in the seat of our parliament.

A year ago, we were still in the grips of the COVID-19 pandemic, red lists and the omicron variant. We have all had to lean on each other and many of us have lost loved ones. In our own caucus we lost our Chief Whip Lorraine Botha. The invasion of the sovereign state of Ukraine by its colonising neighbour Russia has had effects across the world, and we are seeing a devastating tragedy unfold in the wake of the earthquake in Turkiye & Syria last week Sunday. The last year has taxed us all. As leaders we feel a deep sense of responsibility to our citizens. In 1963 Martin Luther King Jr said,

“We are now faced with the fact that **tomorrow is today**. We are confronted with **the fierce urgency of now**...This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for **vigorous and positive action**.”

I feel that **fierce urgency of now** every time I talk to a citizen, a small business owner or a public servant. We are desperate for urgent action today for tomorrow. As the government of the Western Cape, we are delivering a clear difference for our residents now, not plans or platitudes, but **recognisable, tangible action**.

I am proud to be the Premier of this province. I know that it has been an extraordinarily tough year for all of us, but everywhere I go I see people taking action: citizens stepping up; entrepreneurs finding growth opportunities and everyone hustling. As a government we recognise our important role in creating an environment where all of us can thrive and take action. That is why I am gripped with **the fierce urgency of now**, not only for this province but for the **whole of South Africa**.

Energy crisis

This starts with how we are approaching the energy crisis.

This is in stark contrast to a national government that is:

- appointing a new minister at a hefty cost to the taxpayer;
- laying out contradictory plans with few details;
- creating anxiety that a new state of disaster will again see wholesale looting of South Africans' money, senseless regulations; and
- increasingly centralised power in an "Imperial Presidency".

I call on President Cyril Ramaphosa to ensure that this new State of Disaster follows some of the simple steps that we took during the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure greater transparency and accountability, such as **accountability to parliament**. During the pandemic, this **provincial legislature** established a committee to oversee all COVID-19-related government expenditure and I welcome the Western Cape parliament establishing a similar oversight committee for the energy crisis. **We are ready to account!**

The Western Cape government team has shown that when we are confronted with situations of extreme stress and crisis **we innovate and deliver**. During COVID-19 the whole Western Cape government team pulled together and in partnership with our citizens, we responded. I am still filled with immense pride when I think of how we delivered:

- the largest field hospital, on the continent "**The Hospital of Hope**", in six weeks;
- how our health department became the local courier company. When they saw queues of our most vulnerable citizens at clinics, they **responded by delivering chronic medication right to our citizens' doors**; and
- how we developed **drive-through vaccination sites** to help people get vaccinated.

We showed a can-do attitude when we were faced with the droughts of 2017/18/19 and together avoided catastrophe. I firmly believe that we will do it now again in the face of the energy crisis.

Electricity provision is not a provincial government's mandate. But we will not neglect our duty in serving our citizens. We are putting our heads together, drawing from a deep pool of expertise in our government, coming up with our own plan, and leaning on the resilience we have already developed.

To lead our interventions, I set up the **Western Cape Energy Council**, when we were at the height of stage 6 rolling blackouts last year. And at the beginning of this year, I employed former Eskom executive Alwie Lester to help advise us on our energy resilience drive. Mr. Lester comes with a **wealth of expertise and knowledge** and has formed a valuable part of our team. The Energy Council is focused on both the short-

term crisis but also the longer term. We are developing an energy plan for the province that informs our short-term responses.

Energy security for Water, WIFI & Health

This government is stepping in to ensure that the most basic needs of our citizens are protected during these relentless blackouts: our residents are our responsibility. **We are making these intervention in water, WIFI & Health.**

Water & health: Mr Speaker, as the Western Cape Government, we are making sure that municipalities are resourced to ensure safe drinking water and working sewage infrastructure during rolling blackouts through the release of nearly **R89 million** in emergency funding. The money will be used to purchase backup generators for the treatment and supply of water services. Stringent checks and balances are in place to ensure the funds are used transparently, and they **are being released in accordance with strict guidelines**. We will monitor every Rand to ensure this emergency funding goes toward keeping services running as smoothly as possible.

WIFI & connectivity: I have already met with the CEO of Vodacom and Chairman of the Association of Communications & Technology (ACT), to understand exactly what they are doing to **ensure connectivity during extended blackouts**. We all need to come together to ensure that our citizens and residents have access to information. During a time of disaster reliable access to clear, understandable information is as essential to helping citizens make decisions for themselves and their loved ones as safe drinking water. It is also for this reason that I am going to be resuming **my weekly digicons**, that I hosted during the pandemic, to help citizens and businesses understand what is happening and get the answers to the many questions that we all have.

We have already taken this action, demonstrating that desperately needed *fierce urgency of now*, but we also understand that we must act today for *tomorrow*.

I have requested the provincial treasury to allocate just over **R1 billion rand to respond to the energy crisis** in the upcoming three-year budget period. This is proposed to:

- respond to the **short-term impact of loadshedding** now on government services;
- **secure diesel fuel** to keep essential public services running during loadshedding – you don't want a power failure in one of our ICUs;
- help **buffer schools from loadshedding** – our children's education must come first;
- provide **poorer households with “emergency power packs”** that help reduce the impact of loadshedding on daily tasks – everyone from caregivers to learners are having to get up an hour early to prepare for the day; and
- **assist SMMEs assess & implement alternative energy options.**

In all things energy we are gripped by the *fierce urgency of now*.

It is my pleasure to welcome Akhona Winisi as one of my special guests here today. Akhona lectures at False Bay College In Westlake here in Cape Town, preparing a generation of young people to become “solar heroes”. Last year I along with Western Cape Finance and Economic Opportunities Minister Mireille Wenger helped launch the exciting new Solar Photovoltaic (SPV) qualification through the Premier’s Council on Skills. The qualification - being rolled out at several TVET Colleges in the province – will become critical as we bolster our drive towards energy resilience by harnessing the massive and growing solar PV market. Keep up the good work, Akhona. We need as many solar PV specialists as we can train to help us end our reliance on coal.

Municipal Energy Resilience

Another key intervention of this government in addressing the power crisis is the Municipal Energy Resilience plan, a local government-level programme that develops, supports and builds capacity at municipalities across our province to implement renewable energy projects. Across the Western Cape **6 756 PV applications** have already been approved by municipalities, with a total capacity of **197 MW**.

The roll out of this programme is proceeding very well and is showing results now:

- The City of Cape Town:
 - is the first municipality in SA to **offer cash for power**;
 - is already protecting its residents from **two levels of loadshedding**;
 - has allocated **R132 million** to diesel & **R25 million** for diesel storage;
 - **connected generators** to 62 water pump stations, 26 wastewater treatment plants and 110 sewer pumps;
 - is adding **70MW** of solar PV generation to its portfolio, spread across the Atlantis, Athlone and Paardevlei projects;
 - concluded the first phase of the procurement of **200MW** of additional power last year; and
 - is now putting out a dispatchable energy tender, expected to yield at least **500MW** for Cape Town’s grid.
- **George** has a wheeling framework and is running a pilot project through an energy trader to supply power. Through the use of systems work currently underway in partnership with the Western Cape government, further municipal wheeling for other municipalities will soon be enabled;
- **Mossel Bay** is supporting private sector energy from waste technology, as well as how they can enable the use of flare-off from Mossgas and the role that they will play in 3000 MW of gas to energy;

- **Stellenbosch** is working towards procuring energy from Independent Power Producers;
- **Saldanha** is building on its location to become a green hydrogen hub. I am very proud of the collaboration that we are driving between ourselves and the Northern Cape for a green hydrogen corridor, which I will address shortly.

And municipalities across our province, just like Cape Town, are budgeting for diesel. The unfortunate issue is that this money is being diverted from critical municipal services due to a national government failure and inability to act.

While this province is showing the **fierce urgency of now**, and putting more megawatts onto the grid, national government is adding more ministers.

Renewable energy/green economy push

The Western Cape government is on a drive to increase energy resilience, not only to mitigate the effects of load shedding and the resulting economic damage, but also to highlight the immense potential that the power generation sector, specifically the **green economy**, has in being able to stimulate growth, attract investment and create employment.

Since 2011 the sector has attracted nearly R18 billion in foreign direct investment. This is a **burgeoning market, one which we are harnessing to its full potential.**

In December I signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** with my Northern Cape counterpart, Premier Zamani Saul, at South Africa's inaugural Green Hydrogen summit, held here in Cape Town.

As the Western Cape Government, we are working with our allies, in the case of GH2, the Northern Cape Government, the Freeport Saldanha Industrial Development Zone and international partners, such as the Namibian government, to make **optimal use of the potential of green hydrogen** in our region.

Our **Just Energy Transition**, of which our GH2 drive is just one part, requires us to shift to reliable and clean green energy. This will not only slow down the progression of the climate crisis and lower our dependency on fossil fuels but will also help strengthen our power generation capabilities, while offering new opportunities for trade and export through green hydrogen.

Speaker, our drive to deliver, and our success in doing so, is drawing people from other parts of South Africa to our province. We are excited that you have chosen to bring your energy and your skills here, and to make the Western Cape your home. Reliable, accessible infrastructure is a key part of our government's promise, and to paraphrase Martin Luther King Jr, **we are building today for tomorrow** here.

Education infrastructure

Covid-19 dealt a severe blow to our education system. But since our learners and teachers returned to class full-time, we have ably diminished the impact of learning and teaching losses suffered during the pandemic.

Our education community rolled up its sleeves and dug deep to claw back the time lost in class and expand the province's schooling environment. Once more, our investment in infrastructure has proved to be essential.

In December, I along with Provincial Education Minister David Maynier donned our hard hats and visited a site in Delft where we were building a new school.

Rosendaal Junior High School forms part of our unprecedented school infrastructure initiative, the **Rapid School Build Programme**. It will deliver 842 new classrooms this year of which 662 classrooms have already been delivered.

Delivering quality education starts with four walls and a roof to ensure a dignified educational environment for our educators and learners. This government is expanding places of teaching and learning and also considering online options. Every child deserves to learn in a space and manner that is safe and inspiring.

This is a tangible investment in our future: our children.

Thank you to all the officials, government partners, contractors, and school staff for all your hard work.

The speed and quality of the work is inspiring, and you have my sincere gratitude.

The number of learners in our province's schools has grown by an average of **17 900, learners every year for the past five years**. This year we have already placed over 120 000 Grade 1 and Grade 8 learners and are in the process of placing the remaining 1 400 learners, the vast majority of whom were extremely late applications made in January this year.

To maintain our high standard of education and manage our increasing learner population, the Western Cape Education Department recently **appointed 1 143 additional** teachers and we are not stopping there. In the year ahead we plan to add a further 430 first level educators.

The scale of the loadshedding crisis impacts all aspects of life, including schooling. But The Western Cape Education Department is working to keep the curriculum on track, through the following interventions:

- **41 schools have entered into agreements with 8 companies** to install solar power solutions;

- In addition to this, the Department is helping schools to **replace traditional light fittings with energy efficient ones**. Twenty-five schools received funding in the 2022/23 year to fit LED lights;
- The Department is also investigating **installing solar PV panels at all new and replacement schools**.

Our investments in education are bearing fruit and I am so proud of the Matric Class of 2022. Our pass rate increased to **81.4%**, while at the same time we achieved a **retention rate of nearly 70%**, resulting in 49 102 candidates passing their matric exams.

Five Western Cape candidates ranked amongst the best and the brightest in South Africa:

- Kelly Prowse from Rustenburg Girls' High School was recognised as the top candidate in Quintile 5, the top candidate in Mathematics, and the joint top candidate in the entire country!
- Simone Louw from Bloemhof High School ranked second in Quintile 5, while Kenneth Janson from Hoër Jongenskool Paarl was third in the same category;
- Athenkosi Khonzani from the Centre of Science and Technology was awarded second place in the Quintile 3 category;
- and Jason de Villiers from Rondebosch Boys' High was the second placed candidate in Mathematics.

Congratulations to each of you on your **outstanding achievements!** The top overall candidate in the country has come from the Western Cape in five of the past six years. And the top candidate in Mathematics has come from our province for the past four years in a row.

We are very proud of all our learners, many of whom overcome intimidating odds to achieve their goals. Among these marvelous learners is Luca Crouse who was given a Ministerial Award for succeeding despite facing tremendous challenges. Luca is living with Apraxia of Speech, a speech-sound condition that prevents him from communicating verbally. In sitting for his final exams, he required a facilitator to stabilise his hand so he could write. His determination and bravery paid off: he achieved an average of 82% in the 2022 National Senior Certificate with four distinctions. To give you a sense of what he overcame, Luca would sometimes sit for 5-6 hours at a time to complete his exams.

Growth For Jobs

Speaker, while we celebrate the successes of our matriculants, it is essential that they are able to enter a thriving economy filled with multiple job opportunities. Our country's energy woes also impact another key priority of our government. Job creation is at risk.

We must work harder than ever before to preserve and keep creating jobs amid this crisis.

Our province's economic growth is muted. The Western Cape's growth is predicted to be less than 0,5% this year.

But there are encouraging signs the province's economy is rebounding. Take our tourism sector, among the hardest hit by COVID-19 through the shutting down of air travel. It is now making an encouraging recovery.

In December Cape Town International Airport recorded a **spectacular 96% recovery in international 2-way passenger numbers** when compared to December 2019.

South Africans also jumped at the chance to travel again. The domestic terminal, for the same month, saw a **solid 72% recovery** when compared to 2019. This brought the 2-way passenger numbers for the airport to over 7, 2 million in 2022.

Our hotels are also an important gauge of how our tourism sector is booming once more post-COVID-19.

Hotel occupancy for the Western Cape stood at 72% in December 2022. This represents a full recovery rate of 106% when compared to December 2019.

Our recovery this year will be further augmented by a **calendar full of events** such as the Women's Cricket World Cup, the e-Prix, the Cape Town Cycle tour, the Netball World Cup, and the Cape Town carnival to name just a few.

The rebound in our tourism economy creates opportunities for more private sector investment. I was recently excited to hear about the development of capewinlands.aero, which is a new airport precinct in the Cape Winelands. It is private sector investment such as this, that I look forward to seeing as we focus on **growing our provincial economy, which creates more job opportunities**.

This remains our single most important priority as it opens up a myriad of opportunities to uplift communities. **Nothing gives a person dignity quite like a job**. And so, we must push ahead in creating a fertile, vibrant, and inclusive ecosystem for more jobs to be created. This of course involves the private sector, which requires an enabling environment to grow.

Any responsible government emerging from the crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic would look to how we can reinvigorate our economy. Thank you to our colleagues in the provincial government who have been hard at work on our "**Growth For Jobs**" strategy which gives expression to this government's drive to drastically reduce unemployment, achieve breakout growth and offer our residents meaningful opportunities to prosper. Our Growth For Jobs strategy is now in the process of **external**

consultation with key stakeholders with the aim of finalising it by the end of the March this year.

This plan sets out a comprehensive and ambitious goal for the Western Cape of **growing the provincial economy by between 4 and 6% by 2035**. The goal is to fuel and stimulate economic growth to achieve a **R1 trillion provincial GDP target by 2035**. This would require an **annual average growth of 3.8% until 2035, translating into 600 000 new jobs**. It is inspired by a vision of achieving an economy that is sustainable, diverse, and thriving, offering hope and prosperity to our residents. As with all of our programmes, it is rooted in data and evidence, involving a whole-of-government approach.

A key component of the strategy is **enabling private-sector-led growth** and the work of businesses, entrepreneurs, and informal traders whose competitiveness and job-creation ability are dependent upon the services we provide. We are blessed with an abundance of talent that is well-positioned to take-up opportunities. We could all see the engine-room of our economy revving during the festive season – thank you for being such a critical successful partner. We will remain supportive and responsive to your needs as this can only benefit all of us.

The urgency with which we need to address unemployment is shown by our emphasis on collaboration. We are not working in isolation, or in silos; we are working together.

Youth interventions

The country's unemployment crisis remains a serious concern. While the Western Cape's employment figures are better than the rest of the country, more must be done to enable job growth.

In the third quarter of 2022, the working-age population of the Western Cape was 4, 92 million people. There were 1, 7 million who were not economically active, including 121,000 people who were discouraged job seekers.

We should be especially concerned over youth unemployment. If a young person loses hope in finding a job, the consequences are usually dire.

Without a job one feels hopeless. This government needs to step up all efforts to resuscitate the job market.

These risks are exacerbated by unemployment. Youth unemployment is at crisis levels.

We are **partnering with YES** to scale opportunities for youth in the Western Cape with a specific focus on tourism including making the Western Cape the events capital of South Africa, a green economy & energy hub, and ICT and tech economy. These are all growth sectors for the province. We are calling on the private sector to join hands with us to address the youth unemployment crisis and at the same time leverage the creativity and innovation of our youth to stimulate these key sectors.

Through our partnership with YES we have set an **initial target for 2023 of 3 000 opportunities, 300 of which will be created in the next 3 months**. This builds onto the **10 000 first work/youth service opportunities** created by the Western Cape Government for youth.

We are helping young people find and explore their passions through supporting **After School Programmes (ASP)**. For example, 739 individuals have been employed as coaches, many of whom **progressed to better employment opportunities** or continued their studies.

Engaged and passionate young people are much more likely to succeed in all aspects of their lives. Often it is only the resourced who have the luxury of exploring different interests and finding their passion – our job is to ensure every child is given this opportunity. We are committed to ensuring every child is able to engage in physical activity, play sports and be creative.

Another intervention offered to young people, particularly at-risk youth, is the **Chrysalis Academy**, an initiative that is part of our Police Oversight and Community Safety Department.

The Academy has seen an encouraging increase in the number of applications from young people wishing to attend its three-month courses. For its current **women's course, which commenced on the 14th of January, it received close to 2190 applications for 230 places**. This points to the quality of the training, the Chrysalis Academy brand, the need, and the positive developmental trajectory that the academy offers young people.

On 9 January 2023, the academy launched its **first ever community-based holistic programme in Atlantis**. It is a pilot programme and will be run over 8 weeks for 26 Atlantis youth who are all matriculants, and unemployed.

Strong families nurture our youth. There is a need to identify individuals and families at-risk earlier. To bolster our Safety plan, the Department of Social Development is on track to **assist 1 8000 families** with family preservation services and over **3 000 parents through parenting programmes**.

Agriculture

There is no better example of resilience than our farmers. When most other sectors of the economy suffered during the pandemic, agriculture flourished, assuring our food security.

The province's agriculture sector is a “**wealth creator**”, contributing to our growth and job creation. It contributes around 11% to the province's GDP and 55% of South Africa's agricultural exports come from this province.

The Western Cape is blessed with abundant farmland and capable, resilient, and indefatigable farming communities who through rain, droughts, heat and cold plough and harvest to keep us fed. After significant work, led by this department and others, I was pleased to see the **Brandvlei dam feeder canal project** finally opened on Friday last week. I look forward to the **Clanwilliam dam project** also finally being concluded by the national department. Infrastructure like this is critical to our province's sustainability.

However, as with every other sector of our economy, its resilience and growth are under threat from loadshedding; a threat that is devastating the poultry and maize industries – among our country's most important staple food items.

In my letter to President Ramaphosa, I warned of the detrimental impact the power crisis is having on agriculture. Just yesterday, we heard the sky-rocketing food inflation numbers, and one of the main causes of this – rolling blackouts. More than **180 000 hectares of permanent crops, with a replacement value of around R60 billion**, are at risk. The knock-on effect would be disastrous. Many of our citizens are already suffocating under the ever-increasing cost of living. If our crops are decimated food prices will be further pushed up and the risk of food insecurity could become a reality.

Food security generally is not about the volumes of foodstuffs and items produced but rather an issue of access. The escalating cost of living is making it very difficult for many households to put enough food on the table.

To help supplement food security I encourage communities to start growing their own food gardens.

For the current financial year, our Agriculture Department has assisted **in growing 2 692 household food gardens, 185 community projects, and 28 school food gardens.**

Our plan in the coming year is to support **3 000 household food gardens** each year over the medium-term, as well as **85 community and school food gardens**. These interventions enable and enhance access to food and nutrition at the household and individual level, thereby contributing to the well-being and health of our citizens.

In our bid to assure food security, the Western Cape Department of Agriculture continues to accelerate the implementation of the **Nourish to Flourish Mobilisation strategy**. It brings together 10 government departments, local municipalities, academic institutions, the private sector and NGOs who collaborate to make sure our most vulnerable people are fed.

The Western Cape Department of Agriculture is helping to drive this government's transformation agenda, helping to **bring previously disadvantaged communities into**

the agricultural fold. Conditional grants support of **R119, 697 million** was made available through the Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme (CASAP) to support emerging farmers. The **Ilima/Letsema conditional grant saw R58, 993 million** given to smallholder producers, which include household gardens.

The Western Cape is a construction site

We are creating more jobs in our province through infrastructure development – a critical economic lever.

The Western Cape continues to lead the country in the value of buildings that have been completed over the past year.

This is an important metric for job creation and shows solid confidence in our economy. It is also a tangible indication that we are prioritising the infrastructure needs of our residents.

In **2022, 27% more building plans** were passed in the province as compared to the previous year. The Western Cape recorded **R25 billion worth of completed buildings** between January and November last year. This represents **40% of the total value of buildings in South Africa** completed over this period.

Between January and August 2022, the value of buildings completed in the Western Cape **was R19.6 billion**, representing a year-on-year growth rate of 42.1%, compared to R13.2 billion in Gauteng, with a year-on-year growth rate of 8.7%.

Over the same period, the value of building plans passed in the province totalled **R24.29 billion**, representing a year-on-year growth rate of 25.2%, compared to R23.3 billion in Gauteng, with a negative year-on-year growth rate of -1.9%.

Building plans passed and completed is a leading economic indicator, which signals confidence in the provincial economy. It also bodes well for the construction industry and the jobs it supports.

For a number of months in a row now **the Western Cape has outperformed the country's largest economy, Gauteng**, in both the value of buildings passed and completed.

This is according to Statistics South Africa's selected building statistics for the private sector as reported by local government institutions' report, released on 20 October 2022.

Infrastructure

To further attract investment to our province, to better enable the private sector to help stimulate job creation and growth we need to continue intensifying infrastructure investment. We also need to develop our towns and cities to meet the needs of a growing population. The **province's population is currently 7, 2 million and is estimated**

to grow to 8 million before 2030. We are under pressure to dramatically expand our public infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing population.

The idea of establishing an Infrastructure Department, which will come into full operation on 1 April this year is to lead this charge and encapsulates our commitment to build **today for tomorrow**.

As we establish the Infrastructure Department, the aim is to further prioritise the importance of developing and maintaining critical infrastructure in our province, both as a means to ensure our roads, bridges, and sewerage systems, and other development projects, are of a high quality. I want to recognise Cape Town's Mayor for also **focusing on infrastructure investment** with his recent commitment to grow Cape Town's infrastructure investment by **110% in three years**. It is noteworthy that Cape Town now spends more money on public infrastructure than Johannesburg.

Some key WCG infrastructure projects include:

- the upgrading of **Refinery Interchange** on the N7 currently underway,
- the construction of a by-pass linking TR02101 and TR02501 including an interchange around **Malmesbury**,
- the **Stanford to Gansbaai rehabilitation**, as well as
- the **Calitzdorp to Oudtshoorn rehabilitation** of District Road 1688.

This investment, as well as the investment in maintenance undertaken through our own roadworker teams across this province speak to the focus on maintaining the infrastructure we have.

The **Cogmanskloof project** is just one of our major infrastructure successes that I want to highlight. The upgrade – which started in May 2019 – was completed in the last half of 2022.

Through this one initiative over 600 job opportunities were created, proving infrastructure development is an important lever to unlock economic growth and job creation. It is evidence that as a government we had to bring into sharp focus infrastructure development as it is the backbone of a modern society.

This project showcases what we are able to achieve through collaboration and innovation. A special feature is the **award-winning Ashton Arch**; the country's first concrete tied arch bridge, built using a transverse launching method. This represents our infrastructure accomplishments and is a proud moment for the people of this region and for the Provincial Government.

Social housing

But our attempts to build better communities by delivering critical infrastructure and services are under attack from extortion mafias & syndicates. Our infrastructure team is

having to spend millions to combat these criminals. As much as **R1, 5 million is spent each month on beefing up security at construction sites.**

As always, it is the residents who suffer the most. The number of housing beneficiaries affected by extortion has risen dramatically over the past several months, from 18 000 to 21 000 residents. And it is not only extortion, it is also **stealing other people's rights to home ownership by illegally occupying sites** that are earmarked for social housing and mixed-use developments like the Helen Bowden site, Woodstock hospital and other locations. These illegal occupations hinder our ability to deliver thousands of opportunities for those who need it the most.

I want to thank our partners, The City of Cape Town, our law enforcement agencies, and community organisations for taking a stand against these criminal syndicates. Despite these significant challenges there are major successes in housing delivery to acknowledge.

For the year ahead, the province has committed to **creating 9395 housing opportunities.**

Our **Help Me Buy a Home initiative** is a growing success. We exceeded our target to deliver 2 000 units this year. We delivered 2074 units through this programme.

In August, I was privileged to share in the joy of beneficiaries who moved into their brand-new homes at the **De Hoop housing project in Malmesbury.** The first phase of this initiative delivered 395 houses. It will eventually create 3 468 housing opportunities.

Construction has also commenced at the **Goodwood station initiative** consisting of 1055 units.

We have delivered 394 social housing opportunities. Among the projects are:

- Maitland Mews with 204 units;
- Regent Villas with 60 units;
- Conradie Park Phase 1 with 130 units, with the whole of the Conradie Park development delivering 3 500 units in total.

In the last year over **1 000 job opportunities at construction projects have been facilitated.** We exceeded our job creation target for that period and will continue to prioritise employment creation in the built environment sector.

The joy I get when I hand over keys to a house built by the Western Cape Government is almost unmatched. I say "almost" because the visible, tangible upliftment of communities, with residents who are now able to find dignity and pride in their homes, brings me even more happiness.

Health Infrastructure

The poet Virgil once said: “The greatest wealth is health”. Delivering quality healthcare to our residents is vital to ensuring their well-being so that they can be active economic citizens.

We are continuously expanding health services to meet the needs of a growing population:

- the **Gansbaai Clinic** has been upgraded;
- a new day clinic was built in **Laingsburg**;
- the new **Observatory Forensic Pathology** Institute is nearing completion;
- phase 1 of a new Emergency Centre at **Victoria Hospital** has been completed;
- new acute psychiatric wards have been completed in Hermanus and Bredasdorp; and
- the new casualty centre at the **Red Cross War Memorial Children’s hospital** would not be possible without the work of their powerful fundraising team.

And Speaker, we are investing in **today for tomorrow** in transformative health infrastructure. The redevelopment of **Tygerberg Hospital** – the biggest hospital in the Western Cape and the second biggest hospital in South Africa - is making steady progress through a public-private sector partnership, and the **Klipfontein regional hospital** which is deemed a crucial megaproject is at the conceptual and professional services phase.

Our infrastructure investment is not only focused on bricks and mortar. **The award-winning hospital and emergency centre tracking information system, or HECTIS** as it is commonly known, is a web-based patient management system for emergency centres and is the first and only one of its kind in South Africa. Today, HECTIS can be found in forty-one health facilities in the Western Cape. HECTIS is allowing our healthcare team to be an agile, data-driven department that is playing a key role in violence prevention and monitoring.

Mobility

Closely aligned with the new Infrastructure department is the Department of Mobility, which is tasked with finding innovative ways to improve and enhance mobility, to connect communities to employment and other opportunities. People need to get to and from work, school, and amenities safely and reliably.

This is a vital component of a thriving modern society, key to connecting people, moving goods, and service delivery forward.

We must keep up with the urgent mobility needs of communities.

With public transport, specifically the passenger rail network, in ruins, the Mobility Department has an immense challenge ahead of it to find solutions to getting public transport back on track.

Mismanagement, incompetence, and crime have driven our public transport system into the ground instead of forward. Many people, particularly the working class, are hit the hardest by this public transport void.

I am slightly buoyed by the **partial reopening of the Eerste River-Bellville train service** in the middle of last month. For over two years the line has been closed, leaving tens of thousands of commuters in the lurch.

In the meantime, we will continue to invest in alternative modes of transport and in the year ahead, we are pleased to announce that we will be launching Phase 4 of the **Go George project**.

Like the energy crisis, the public transport crisis is one of national government's own making.

Persistent issues like the decimation of the passenger rail service and the inability of the national government - and other state-run entities - to rehabilitate this critical mode of mobility is of serious concern.

I look forward to **announcing a new Minister of Mobility** next week.

The festive season road fatality stats showed a **36.7% decline compared to the previous period**. Almost every kilometre of our province's roads were patrolled or had traffic officials manning roadblocks.

I want to thank and congratulate all our traffic law enforcement personnel and agencies, as well as their disaster management colleagues, for working tirelessly over this past festive season in making our roads safer.

I saw for myself the hard work put into making sure road users are safe and behave responsibly when I visited a vehicle checkpoint at the Huguenot Tunnel last December ahead of the festive season "rush".

One life lost is still too many, though. While we intensify our road safety initiatives each year, the onus also falls on you, the public, to do your bit in making our roads safer.

Crime/safety

Improving law enforcement and the safety of our citizens remains a top priority for this government. By making communities safer we can create an environment where people can realise their potential and flourish, free from fear of becoming another victim of crime.

The Western Cape Safety Plan remains our overarching guide to fighting crime. Informed by data and technology, the plan is a comprehensive strategy that not only combats crime but also takes an analytical, scientific approach to stay one step ahead of criminals.

Crime poses a major risk to our province's prosperity. If people are too afraid to leave their homes to go to work and school how can we expect progress? How are businesses expected to operate in gang-infested areas where violence is a daily reality?

Given the severe under-resourcing of the South African Police Service in the province the Western Cape Government has stepped in. One of our flagship interventions has been the **Law Enforcement Advancement Plan (LEAP)**.

Since its inception, the Law Enforcement Advancement Plan (LEAP) has been a resounding success. This initiative has seen over **1200 women and men** - like Assistant Chief Jason Hamilton and Principal Inspector Ronel Londt who are with us today in the Chamber - **recruited, trained, and deployed to communities** that have been struggling with high crime rates, specifically murders. I want to offer my most sincere gratitude to you and your fellow LEAP members for your service and dedication.

As with our COVID-19 response, all our efforts to address the complexities of crime are **data-led and evidence-based**. This has guided our anti-crime strategy. As I said in my response to the President's State of the Nation Address on Tuesday, the numbers tell their own story. Here are the numbers for **murder in the 2021/2022 financial year** by provinces:

- Eastern Cape 4 407, up by 18.7%
- Free State: 992, up by 18.9%
- Gauteng: 5 570 up by 36.6%
- KZN: 6 495 up by 34.6%
- Limpopo: 1 012 up by 41.1%
- Mpumalanga: 1201 up by 28.4%
- North West: 1029 up by 40.2%
- Northern Cape: 366 up by 27.5%
- Western Cape: 4 109 up by 6.8%

The figures are devastating, and you have to ask yourself with these numbers how can the Minister of Police not resign in shame. The devastating figures also reveal that the **only province to show a difference is the Western Cape**. This is due to the introduction of our LEAP officers in murder hotspot areas. Breaking the figures down further we can see that there was an **8,2% reduction in the murder rate for the 1st quarter of the 2022/23** financial year, where LEAP officers are operational.

Through our solid partnership with the City of Cape Town, LEAP managed to sustain its successes in pushing down murders in the second quarter of 2022/23.

Murder decreased in the following areas in the second quarter of 2022 when compared with statistics from the same period the previous year:

- Mfuleni (-32.3%)
- Kraaifontein (-15.6%)
- Gugulethu (-16.2%)
- Khayelitsha (-9.4%)
- Harare (-3.6%)

We must continuously intensify this programme alongside our partners the City of Cape Town, neighbourhood watch groups, community policing forums, and the South African Police Service. Through solid partnerships our “boots-on the-ground” approach is augmented by data and evidence, leading to the optimal use of policing resources. Each week these brave, dedicated women and men are taking guns and other dangerous weapons off of our streets. Since the inception of LEAP **over 300 firearms have been seized in areas where members are deployed**. Our communities have welcomed LEAP, having seen the impact they have had.

With each firearm confiscated, a life is saved. With each arrest made, those who choose to lead a life of crime are forced to face the consequences of their actions. This year we are exploring an exciting new initiative to look at a model LEAP station, and I will update you further in this regard.

SAPS Devolution

These successes are another clear demonstration as to what could be achieved if we decentralise policing to the communities that they serve, not some far-flung office in Pretoria.

Devolving policing authority to the provincial government is just one step towards decisively arresting high crime rates in the Western Cape.

If we had to take over this critical service, the Western Cape Government would **increase the budget for the police service and ensure the money** is spent on things like recruiting more officers.

I must emphasise, this is not a matter of control. It is a matter of better managing this critical competency. It is about **better resourcing our men and women in blue**. Our fight is not with you the ordinary, hardworking police officer deployed to violent

neighbourhoods, putting your safety on the line so others can feel safer. Our fight is with the police minister and the recalcitrance and neglect he has demonstrated in the face of mass shootings, gender-based violence, kidnappings and extortion.

We will continue to exert pressure on the national government. The police minister in particular should put his pride to one side and allow us to take over the management of the police service here. I am pleased that I am **not the only provincial Premier who is wanting greater control and oversight of policing**. Like I have done with energy **I will work closely with all my provincial colleagues to best meet the needs of the residents of our provinces**.

Not only are the SAPS in the Western Cape woefully under-resourced, but there is also disturbing evidence that some in the service have been **“captured” by gangs**. A High Court judgment delivered last year confirms what many of us have long suspected: gangsters have infiltrated the police service in the Western Cape. The very people tasked with keeping our residents safe are themselves part of the problem.

I tasked the Western Cape Police Ombudsman to investigate the matter. The Ombud's report has been finalised, and I would like to report on the next two key steps I am taking:

- I am now in the process of **establishing a panel of eminent persons** to make specific recommendations as to how we should respond to this cancer which has infected so much of our policing; and
- as a start to ensure that our crime-fighting leadership is untarnished by the proceeds of crime, the provincial government will be **funding lifestyle audits** of the **top brass** involved in crime-fighting in this province. We want to make sure that in the words of Judge Daniel Thulare those SAPS members who are at the “the table where the Provincial Commissioner of the SAPS in the Western Cape sits with his senior managers” are untarnished. I believe these lifestyle audits are an important part of our oversight duty.

The complex nature of crime requires an intensive, concerted, and holistic approach to arresting this crisis. While we are seeing encouraging signs in our war against crime, it is an ongoing struggle and so we must take our violence prevention component further.

We cannot only fight crime reactively; we need to prevent it, addressing its root causes.

This is admittedly complex, but a challenge we still need to tackle head-on. In 2022, the **Violence Prevention Unit** was established under the auspices of the Provincial Department of Health and Wellness. Rooted in our evidence and data-based approach to addressing crime we are learning lessons in how we can better utilise our health resources and data to fight crime. The Unit is **equipped to identify and design interventions to prevent violent crime in our communities**.

Gender-based violence and Femicide: Stop the cycle

One of the most pressing and disturbing issues facing our province, one that keeps me up at night, remains violence against women and children. I welcome with a broken heart the conviction of the man who murdered and raped 8-year-old Tazne van Wyk. The whole of society has to respond to this vile scourge!

Women are the backbone of our province, while children must be cherished and protected at all costs as they are *our tomorrow, today*. Yet tragically, rarely a day goes by without a gruesome story in our news cycle of a child or woman being harmed or murdered.

We recently **launched our campaign against gender-based violence in Khayelitsha**. It focuses on the issue of ending the cycle of violence, specifically on how in the majority of gender-based violence cases boys who witnessed or were themselves abused go on to the cycle of abuse into adulthood.

I hope the campaign will lead to behavioural changes among men and boys. When launching the campaign at the FAMSA offices in Khayelitsha, with more than 40 men, we heard them share their thoughts on the scourge of violence against women and children, while others opened up about their own experiences. All of them agreed that to stop gender violence, **we as men must speak up and speak out**. It is critical for men who have been exposed to violence or were victims themselves in their youth to seek help. Do not be afraid. **Put your pride to one side. Speak to a relative, or a friend. Seek professional help** by accessing services offered by our Department of Social Development. You are not alone.

FAMSA counsellor, Chuma Mangxa, who attended the launch, perfectly summed up our collective efforts to end violence against women and children when he said, "We are killing this scourge at the root".

A campaign against gender-based violence is dependent on our social workers who are our unsung heroes. Each day they confront the harsh realities so many of our residents face. We appreciate the critical work they do. Thank you for giving your time to help the most vulnerable in our society. I am proud to announce that in the year ahead, we will add more social workers and dedicate ourselves to more mental health services.

The need for social services is sadly never-ending. In a deeply unequal society, too many people fall through the cracks. It is up to us to help them up and provide them with the services that they need to find their dignity so they can become fully functioning members of society.

We are doing this with the help of our partners in the NGO and private sector.

Local Government

Our municipalities are at the coalface of service delivery, and the support that they receive from **our staff in the departments of Local Government and Provincial Treasury is invaluable**. Ensuring their stability, which has been a challenge amid loadshedding, is critical to keeping our cities and towns functioning optimally.

While we are tackling current challenges facing local government, we must also look at historical issues. Apartheid has left deep scars on many of our communities, still evident today. Our towns and cities sadly still reflect the cruel, dehumanising divisions created by Apartheid.

The result has been gaping and growing inequality.

The **Regional Socio-Economic Projects (RSEP) programme** aims to address Apartheid spatial planning by working closely with municipalities and government departments to identify projects that will have a real and lasting impact on the quality of life of communities. Thank you to the KfW development bank and the German government for their ongoing support for violence prevention, urban upgrade and RSEP.

It is a citizen-centric urban upliftment initiative focused on **delivering neighbourhood-scale improvements** to underserved communities in the Western Cape.

The Western Cape's ground-breaking **Inclusionary Housing Policy Framework** helps municipalities to facilitate and enhance the inclusion of affordable homes in urban centres, helping to bring people closer to economic opportunities and services.

The introduction of inclusionary housing is complex, and it involves numerous role-players and stakeholders.

This government will continue working hard to end inequality, to close that gap between communities to foster inclusivity.

For the Western Cape Government, the need to transform our cities and towns is non-negotiable. We cannot condone a "Not-In-My-Backyard" mentality and call on residents to work with us.

Disaster management

The Western Cape is prone to a host of natural and man-made disasters, and we know that as climate change accelerates, we will need to respond to more extreme events. This week, **dam levels dropped to 50% capacity** in the Western Cape, with the likelihood of below average rainfall this winter it is **critical that we make those water-saving behaviours we all adopted in the last drought part of our daily lives forever**. This year, we are launching a water resilience project, putting our budget behind safeguarding this essential resource.

Our disaster management first responders play a **critical role in our province in saving lives and infrastructure**. When residents are forced to evacuate their homes when

disasters strike, our brave disaster management personnel charge into the flames and floodwaters. Through their courage and dedication, our communities are safer. I also want to thank them for **their willingness to share their expertise** with other provinces, such as KwaZulu Natal after the devastating April floods.

Amid heightened levels of loadshedding, which affects water supply, wastewater treatment, and sewerage facilities, our local government officials are at the ready 24/7 to prevent or mitigate any eventualities.

The **Provincial Disaster Management Centre** will remain on high alert for as long as intensified loadshedding persists and is in close and constant contact with municipalities across the province. Furthermore, the **Provincial Electricity System Emergency Plan** requires each department to set up Provincial Government Departmental Response Teams, which are in place. These teams are tasked with ensuring the continuity of operations in the event of a major emergency.

Good governance enables service delivery

The country is still feeling the impact of a dark decade under the calamitous spectre of state capture and corruption. The Western Cape government has consistently and doggedly pushed back against those who have enabled corruption.

We have built up a government people can trust, based on our values. We make sure that whistleblowers are taken seriously and protected. I am very grateful to all our staff for ensuring that for the 2021/22 financial 100% of provincial government departments received **unqualified audits**. This good governance allows us to ensure that we maximise our service delivery to the residents of this province.

We are listening

To better ourselves, we must continue listening. Bryant McGill said, "One of the sincerest forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say."

I have crisscrossed the province over the past year meeting with communities, cementing relationships and forging new partnerships and friendships. Over the last year I have **arrived unannounced at key service delivery sites to understand citizens' experience of our services**. For the upcoming financial year, I have **lobbied to fund a project that focuses on improving the customer service experience** and the face our government presents to our residents.

I also know that our citizens have connected with our team online – thank you to our teams who have facilitated these online connections through our broadband project which services over **1900 WCG WIFI sites** across the province.

I have met the most remarkable people. In **Prince Albert**, I was introduced to the PACT Youth Centre which is helping to stage the town's inaugural jazz festival later this year.

In Laingsburg, we visited a safe house for women and children who have experienced violence, run by the Provincial Department of Social Development and its partners in the NGO sector. Meeting the “House Mother” of the shelter and her colleagues, witnessing their passion, was inspiring.

During a tour of **Mitchells Plain** last year I went on a night patrol with a neighbourhood watch group, made up mostly of elderly residents. They may be senior citizens, but their energy and dedication to helping to make their area safer was contagious and gave me hope that with people like this on our side, working with us, we can in small and big ways make a difference.

In **Matjiesfontein**, nestled in the heart of the Karoo, I toured a mineral water production plant, which employs more than a dozen locals.

I have visited small businesses, such as **Siki's Koffee** in Khayelitsha, which not only offers a fantastic cup of coffee, but also roasts coffee beans and supplies numerous other businesses. Owner, Sikelela Dibeka, opened a second Siki's in Claremont during the pandemic, yet another shining example of the tenacious entrepreneurial spirit being nurtured in this province.

My team and I have listened intently to your ideas, suggestions and most importantly your issues at our **First Thursdays**. Through this initiative we bring our government, together with the City of Cape Town, closer to the people.

The pandemic interrupted our First Thursday initiative from going on the road. But this year we are taking First Thursday on the road again. Earlier this month we held it in Mitchells Plain, and I am looking forward to taking it further across the province this year. **I have yet to meet a government that takes such a regular and open door engagement to its citizens.**

I will not ignore citizens' complaints. We must listen and learn from the issues that are raised with us. This government is run transparently and where we fail, we will improve.

The reality is that we are not perfect, but we constantly strive towards working harder and doing better.

As much as you the citizens are the centre of what we do, the Western Cape Government's culture and values too occupy a central role in our work. We will continue to live these values and do everything we can to impart them to you. We must aspire to be a better government and province.

The province of hope

Speaker, with us experiencing rolling blackouts every day I am reminded of the byline of the Washington Post, that “Democracy dies in the darkness”. I will not let our

democracy flounder. Instead, **my commitment to the residents of the Western Cape is that our democracy and our economy will flourish.**

We will continue to work with **“the fierce urgency of now”**.

We are and will be accountable, transparent, responsive, and caring as a government, and place the needs of our citizens in our hearts, even when we are plunged into real darkness due to rolling blackouts.

Many of our citizens are struggling and suffering. They look to us for help and action.

You, the citizens, the people of this extraordinary province are at the centre of everything we do, working today for tomorrow. This government is **“citizen obsessed”**: we are obsessed with doing our best for the people to ensure all of our citizens can find the dignity and well-being they deserve.

This year we are plotting a new, fresh, innovative way forward.

By constantly innovating we can improve and modernise the way we do what we do.

We are working with an acute sense of urgency, given the challenges we seek to overcome.

We must and will strive to do better as a government, to bring more economic opportunities to our residents and make our province a place of prosperity. You have given us this mammoth task, and we will not shy away from moving forward with urgency and determination.

We are **honoured by the faith and trust the people** of the Western Cape have put in us and it is my firm duty to be seized by the *fierce urgency of now* and deliver.