

## SOPA 2024

### **A province that is working and striving for better, every day**

We are a province that is working and striving for better every day

Honourable Speaker and Deputy Speaker,

Honourable members of the provincial Cabinet,

Honourable members and leader of the opposition,

Honourable members of the Provincial Legislature,

Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,

Mayors from our municipalities

The people of our beautiful province and this great city of Paarl

Members of the media,

Distinguished guests,

Good evening

Mr Speaker,

It is my honour to deliver the 2024 State of the Province Address to the people of this exceptional province.

SOPA provides me with an opportunity to reflect on our achievements and where we as public servants could and must do better for our residents, not only as a province, but as a country.

2024 will be an important year for us and the world as over 70 countries and almost R2 billion residents vote in elections, including the voters of the Western Cape and South Africa.

I remain deeply concerned about the growing global shift away from respect for the rule of law and liberal democracy towards authoritarianism, populism and nationalism. Here in South Africa I will continue to stand for ensuring that as Premier the voices of all our residents are heard and respected, and their service delivery needs are met.

#### **The Power of Our People**

The Western Cape and its people are known for their diversity, grit and resourcefulness. It is these characteristics that have ensured our collective success in growing our economy, creating jobs, lifting more people out of poverty, and making our communities safer.

The Western Cape is blessed with a rich diversity and heritage. Our province is a melting pot of cultures and beliefs. It is through our unique diversity that we draw our strength. Regardless of the issue at hand, our diversity should bind us and guides us towards tolerance.

It is only through talking and engaging each other that we can resolve our differences. We owe it to each other to share our views respectfully and with compassion.

Many Western Cape residents and citizens across the world are understandably and rightly deeply affected and concerned by the unfolding crisis in the Middle East. I too am horrified at the violence. My heart breaks, in particular for the children, the vulnerable and innocent citizens who have died in this war. Violence against children is completely unacceptable, in any context. Whether they are in the Middle East, Ukraine, or Cape Town, our children must be protected at all costs.

My focus as Premier has and will continue to be to ensure that regardless of whatever else is happening in the world, that here in the Western Cape, we create the space for diverse views to be shared and expressed and that the rule of law is adhered to.

I have met with and reached out to many organisations and stakeholders to ensure that these two tenets of freedom of expression and the rule of law are always respected here.

Unlike others who seek to divide residents, my role as Premier is to ensure that every resident who wants to express their views can.

We must also acknowledge that while we are rightly so vociferous about the rights of those in the Middle East and elsewhere we have our own serious crisis of violence here in this province and country with 27 000 citizens murdered across South Africa last year.

We must speak up wherever there is injustice and we must simultaneously focus on our residents' critical needs like: Safety, growing the economy and enabling jobs, and ending load shedding.

### **The Western Cape Government "FOR YOU"**

I am citizen obsessed! Everything we do is for you, our citizens.

To my Western Cape Government family, our more than 80 000 members of staff. You are the reason why our province works. As Premier, I owe all our successes to you.

I am very proud that we now form part of the Top Employer Certification, which has certified and recognised over 2 200 Top Employers in 122 countries and regions. The WCG is the first provincial government in the world to be awarded the Top Employer Certification.

When I visited Western Cape Contact Centre last year, I was able to engage with staff members who are in many ways the "face" of this government. From 2019 to this year our contact centre received over 1.4 million calls. More than 1 million tickets were created to receive further attention and of this more than 96% were resolved.

In you our employees, I recognise the passion and dedication I see in myself and my Cabinet: to serve with dignity and humility, placing the needs of our residents above everything.

Thank you for all you do to make this province work: a province of hope and opportunity. We still have a long way to go. And I ask you to stay the course with me and keep striving for better, every day.

I have had the pleasure of traveling the length and breadth of our province many times. When I visit communities and meet our residents, I do so because I want to see for myself how services are being delivered. When I visit a hospital, a clinic, a school, I often do so unannounced. There must be no coffee and muffins waiting for me.

I must see for myself the challenges faced by our people at a SASSA office, even though this is not our responsibility. I want to hear from patients themselves about how long they have been waiting to receive their medicine at a clinic or hospital.

We are accountable to you, our citizens.

### **Devolution of critical services for you our residents**

To maintain the high standard of services we ~~strive to~~ offer our residents, our government is always striving to do better, especially when national government has failed our most vulnerable citizens. It is very clear that 30 years into our democracy national government is unable to deliver on its constitutional mandate.

When they fail to keep people safe, offer reliable public transport, grow the economy and keep the lights on, we must take action!

The most powerful way to help our residents is for a capable provincial government, like ours, to carry out the functions that Pretoria is failing to deliver.

The Western Cape Provincial Powers Bill is about being able to better manage critical functions.

We are desperate to fix Cape Town's central line and get trains back on track. We want to attract private investors to the Port of Cape Town so it can again be an efficient logistics hub that helps create jobs and fuel our economic growth; and we want our citizens in communities like Nyanga, Delft, and Mitchells Plain to be safe and prosperous.

### **Looking after our most vulnerable citizens**

While our government is committed to serving all seven and half million people who live in our province, it is the most vulnerable in society who need our help the most.

As a caring government, we do all we can to help those most in need.

We have a 365-day approach to addressing gender-based violence, and our aim is to do everything that we can to ensure that survivors of violence get the support and assistance they need. Our hard-working social workers like **Katlego Phiri** and **Jade America-Damonse**, both here tonight, are the soul of our social work initiatives. Much like law enforcement officials, they are out there every day, working under difficult conditions, and helping vulnerable residents.

We run 8 Thuthuzela Centres across the province, with the centre at Victoria Hospital expanded, and the expansion of the Stellenbosch centre under way.

There are a further 26 GBV shelters across the province, with another planned for the Overberg region.

Our GBV ambassadors programme is another component of our efforts to tackle this scourge. To date, over 18 000 people have received psychosocial support from Thuthuzela Care centres and DSD-supported GBV shelters.

247 additional social service professionals are being appointed. These appointments will help stabilise an over-burdened welfare and child protection system.

### **Feeding those in need**

We are seeing the devastating impact of the cost-of-living crisis for too many South Africans: hunger, poverty and childhood stunting are some of examples of this. Since 2019 we have provided over 1,1 million cooked meals, through 102 community nutrition and development centres and 358 soup kitchens across the province.

We also know that our learners cannot learn when hungry. Every year over 500 000 vulnerable learners received free school meals through the School Nutrition Programme at Western Cape Government schools.

And during the recent Eskom-outage in the Karoo we provided:

- over 5 000 food parcels to indigent households who lost perishable food,
- continued our school feeding schemes.

And even though the power is back on we will deliver a further 3 000 food parcels to learners from indigent households.

### **A Province of Opportunities**

But the way to build is not to give out more grants, it is to enable our citizens to have the dignity and pride of having a job.

Behind our improving jobs numbers are stories of lives changed for the better. Beyond the statistics are people who have been given back their dignity and worth through employment.

In the Western Cape, everything we do is about creating jobs. It is this government's obsession to keep building an enabling the jobs ecosystem, where we are empowering the private sector to create as many jobs as possible.

Our Growth for Jobs (G4J) strategy is our roadmap to a R1 trillion jobs-rich economy, which we aim to grow by between 4% and 6% each year to meet the needs of an ever-growing province.

With each quarter that passes the Western Cape sees encouraging signs that everything we do to nurture an enabling job creation ecosystem is paying off.

Between the second quarter of 2022 and the second quarter of 2023, the Western Cape's official unemployment rate decreased by 6.6% to 20.9%. This is the lowest unemployment rate in the country and substantially lower than any other provinces.

We were able to add another chapter to this success story when even more employment opportunities were created between quarter three of 2022 and quarter three of 2023, with more than 300 000 new jobs, the most in the country.

Of the 169 000 jobs created in the country in the fourth quarter of the 2022/23 financial year, 167 000 of them were created here in the Western Cape.

Reflecting on jobs in this term of office, the Western Cape economy created almost two thirds (64.9%) of all jobs in South Africa. This shows that good governance, forward thinking government policies and a collaborative government – private sector ecosystem enables opportunities for growth and jobs.

With each set of quarterly labour force figures that are released – indicating a steady decrease in unemployment in our province – we are still reminded that we have do more.

As a government, we must make it as easy as possible for businesses of all kinds to start-up, work and grow in our province.

Our Red Tape Reduction unit is tearing up bureaucratic red tape. Over the past 5 years, the unit has helped save the economy R2.4 billion.

While all businesses are being pummeled by load shedding and crime, small businesses often bear the brunt. We must offer support to them in any way we can. Our SMME Booster Fund has since 2019 assisted over 860 SMMEs, sustaining 4 977 jobs. The Booster Fund has helped these SMMEs grow, creating an additional 651 jobs.

I urge more small business owners to access this fund and become part of our province's economic success.

Furthermore, through our Business Support Helpline service – the only one in the country managed by a province to assist businesses with their red tape challenges - we have received 303 enquiries for this financial year (2023/24) 254 of which have already been resolved.

### **Tourism is the linchpin of our economy.**

The past festive season was a bumper one. More than 30 000 international arrivals flying directly into Cape Town every day, choosing our province as their holiday destination. Cape Town International Airport's seat capacity for this summer season increased by 25% year on year to 1 million passengers for the first time ever and in the last year saw a 48% increase, to 2.8 million two-way passengers breaking the last record on 2019 by 200 000.

This is as a result of our Cape Town Air Access plan developed in 2015 which continues to grow and reap rewards for our province.

George Airport's passenger numbers also grew by 31% year-on-year for December.

And thousands of local visitors chose this province for their holiday destination.

With every visitor to the Western Cape come jobs and a boost to the economy. Nearly R2 billion was injected into the province's economy over December alone!

This is the perfect springboard for our ongoing economic momentum which we must build on this year to keep driving our job creation successes.

To keep building on the province's tourism successes, we have introduced the G4J Tourism Challenge Fund which invests in the development of new tourism infrastructure and experiences to stimulate private sector investment.

One organisation that is benefitting from this initiative is RLabs - an award-winning non-profit company, established in 2009. I have visited RLabs numerous times. We even held a First Thursday at their Mitchells Plain branch.

While we enable the private sector to create jobs, we also know that infrastructure plays a critical role in enabling economic growth.

### **Infrastructure- led economic growth**

Just like our Disaster Management Centre confronts all the extreme weather and man-made events thrown its way, our infrastructure team does not hesitate to jump into action to repair damaged roadways and bridges.

We saw this during the June and September floods last year. 154 roads had to be closed in the aftermath of the Heritage Day long weekend storms. Within a month, though, thanks to the work of the Western Cape Department of Infrastructure, local communities and municipalities this number was quickly reduced to 37 roads.

In a matter of days, the approach to the bridge linking McGregor with Roberston was repaired and the bridge reopened. When we visited the site, a group of school learners were being dropped off by a bus about a kilometer away from the approach to the bridge. A boy told me how for days after the floods he and his friends had to walk several kilometres from where they were dropped off to get home in McGregor due to their bus not being able to use the flood-damaged bridge.

When we plan our road network, we do so with the understanding that roads are so much more than just asphalt and concrete; they are economic arteries feeding our growth.

As the Western Cape grows so must our road network. We are on track to cut the ribbon this month at the N7/Refinery Interchange project - a R248 million investment that created 500 job opportunities for more than 50 SMMEs. And this project like many other infrastructure projects will be a key artery for many more jobs in the future.

### **Education for the future**

Economic growth needs an educated and skilled population. This is one of the many reasons why we invest vast sums of our resources into providing dignified, safe places of teaching and learning for our children.

To keep up with an ever-growing education population, through our Rapid School Build Programme - launched in 2022 – we have built 25 schools, 16 replacement schools and over 1 200 classrooms.

The Matric class of 2023 has done our province proud increasing the pass rate to 81.54%.

Our Grade 12s achieved the top Mathematics pass rate at 75.4%, and the top Physical Sciences pass rate at 82.2%.

We also have the second-highest distinction rate, with 24 982 subject distinctions. Adding to our successes in the classroom is the retention rate from Grade 10 to 12 which went up to 69.3%.

The top Grade 12 candidates in the country came from the Western Cape in 6 of the past 7 National Senior Certificate Exams.

The top candidate in Mathematics has come from the Western Cape for 5 NSCs in a row.

Once again, we are proud that the top Grade 12 in the country achieved this remarkable feat here in the Western Cape.

I love how she and her peers are thinking about their and our future differently. In our conversation she told me that she was going to study mechatronics before medicine as a medical macaronic

degree does not yet exist. She will no doubt be at the forefront of the introduction of this new field of study.

Our learners with special needs are also showing us that they will let nothing hold them back. Well done to **Nizibone Victor Mapolisa**, here tonight – the third top special needs education candidate nationally. You are truly an inspiration to us all.

And our learners could not do it without teachers like **Dr Mariette Wheeler**, from Protea Heights High School, with us tonight, who was nominated for the Global Prize of the Top 10 teachers in the world.

If you visit our schools on Saturdays, you will find thousands of learners and teachers hard at work to reverse the learning losses we saw over the Covid-19 pandemic. Many children fell behind during the lockdowns. We acted decisively by investing R1.2 billion into our #BackOnTrack programme.

To maintain quality education standards, the Western Cape is the only province to conduct systemic testing in Mathematics and Language. This gives us a consistent record of improvements and declines in learners' skills and helps us prioritise where we need to invest our efforts.

And our unique collaboration school model is delivery high quality no-fee education to learners in poor communities.

We are now building on this success and exploring additional models of public-private partnerships and drawing private investment into the education sector through Edu Invest – our provincial education department's investment facilitation programme set up with Wesgro.

## **Agriculture**

Our agriculture sector remains one of our most important economic drivers. The sector accounts for more than half of the entire country's agricultural exports.

Growth in agricultural exports has the potential to create another 20 000 jobs and generate an additional R22 billion. But the crisis at the Port of Cape Town is destroying investments and jobs in this sector. That is why we are pushing for more private sector involvement and more control of the port. Its not rocket science to run an efficient modern and competitive port.

In May 2023, in partnership with various stakeholders, we launched the Port Dashboard to optimise operations at the PoCT. It measures indicators such as truck and vessel turnaround times, vessel time at anchorage and at berth, the average size of vessels calling as well as weather conditions.

In discussion with the current port authorities, government, and the private sector, we set targets to improve our competitiveness, and these are reflected in the dashboard but sadly NONE of these targets agreed with the port are being met.

Through an effective port we can get our products to market, and this will create thousands of agri-job opportunities but also open even more agricultural farming opportunities.

We are also making strides in land reform. An independent research report released in December 2023 showed that 83% of land reform farmers who received post-settlement support from the Western Cape Department of Agriculture consider themselves to be successful agri-businesses. This speaks to the high-quality support we offer to emerging farmers.

## **Taking Back our Communities from Criminals**

Safety and jobs are intertwined; one, cannot work optimally without the other. Safety cannot be achieved in isolation. Creating jobs has become as critical as fighting crime. A safe community is a prosperous one.

Our war on crime involves data, evidence and innovation, which see our women and men in blue fight crime smarter and more efficiently.

During a patrol with Law Enforcement Advancement Plan (LEAP) officers in Hanover Park last year, I saw firsthand how drones can become high-tech force multipliers – our “eyes in the sky” - helping officers on the ground to fight crime.

We are fully embracing innovation in our crime-fighting efforts. Drones, body cameras, ShotSpotter – these are the kinds of innovations that are giving our law enforcement officers the edge they need. When I visited the LEAP bases in Bishop Lavis last month, I was very impressed at how body camera technology is being used in conjunction with ShotSpotter, enabling a more strategic deployment of our policing resources.

It is LEAP members like **Donna-Lee Lombard** who join us in the audience - who are making the real difference.

Apart from LEAP officers deployed to areas with high murder rates, we are also expanding our safety and security footprint to tourism sites like our beaches, mountain slopes and nature reserves.

This past festive season, in partnership with the City of Cape Town and SANParks a 300-strong show of force was deployed to beaches and dozens more officers kept a close eye on the CBD and our tourist attractions.

By building a safe province we enable more jobs. I have said it before and will emphasise it continuously: nothing stops a bullet like a job. Nothing gives you dignity like a job.

Our Safety Plan, launched in 2019, guides how we utilise policing resources to have the most impact. Rooted in data, evidence and technology it looks at a smarter more effective deployment of resources. Our LEAP programme sees more than 1300 women and men deployed every day to murder hotspots in Cape Town.

And we are seeing results! Independent research by the Institute for Security Studies shows that of the four provinces evaluated: Gauteng, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu Natal and the Western Cape, we are the only province where murder has declined in the last five years.

Our K-9 and Rural Safety Units are an added layer of protection for rural communities. We will continue to add more boots on the ground, backed by our data-led, evidence-based approach to policing.

As important as it is to fight crime, we also need to understand its root causes. Poverty and unemployment are in some respects as dangerous as gangsters or hijackers. Poverty robs one of your dignity and humanity.

Examining the root causes of poverty, therefore, is critical. That is why we have established the Violence Prevention Unit (VPU), managed by the provincial Department of Health and Wellness. This unit – officially launched in August 2023 – is a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response to violence. Its primary focus areas are nurturing positive parenting, offering youth socio-



emotional support and reducing gender-based violence. The VPU uses an Area Based Teams approach. Essentially this means pouring resources into identified communities through government and non-government stakeholders who jointly address localised drivers of crime and violence.

But without the help of communities, our law enforcement agencies and capabilities would struggle.

I am always astounded at the dedication of residents who give of their own time to patrol their neighbourhoods, placing their safety at risk so that fellow community members can be safe. Neighbourhood Watches (NHWs) are our eyes and ears in communities. Thank you to people like **Aylmer Manko**, from Paarl Neighbourhood watch, here tonight for what you do.

Often, they know better than law enforcement agencies where the problems in their neighbourhoods are. In essence, they are both crime fighters and intelligence gatherers of sorts, helping official law enforcement bodies to battle crime.

There are 477 accredited NHWs in the province, comprising 14 632 patrollers.

When I go on walkabouts with NHWs I too learn from these brave women and men about various challenges their communities face. During one such walkabout in Mitchells Plain late last year, I noticed streetlights were not working. It gave me a chance to hear directly from community members why the lights were off: criminals constantly stealing cables.

The Western Cape has fewer than 3 000 detectives. In a meeting with SAPS members in Bothasig last year I was told, at the time:

- There were only 48 active members deployed in that policing precinct; and
- There are just 3 detectives at the station. One detective is tasked with investigating more than 270 cases.

We will never stop fighting for more policing authority. National government must come to its senses and realise, just like it cannot manage our rail network, just as it has allowed our country to slip further into the darkness of the energy crisis, its stubborn grip on the SA Police Service is only throttling it to death. We will continue to fight to get more management of policing and show how we can return respect and pride to our police service.

Gangsterism is among our most pressing concerns. It has been confirmed in a court of law that the police service in the Western Cape has been infiltrated by gangs. After learning of this, I took steps to establish the Eminent Persons Advisory panel, which has now been set up and currently working to find solutions to this long-running scourge.

Essentially, building a strong economy involves investing in our youth's potential and future. Too many of our young people are falling through the cracks. We must catch and lift them so that they realise their full potential.

Our Chrysalis Academy and YearBeyond programme are "catching" and helping many of these young people. It is further evidence of our continued investment in our youth, like **Luchulumanco Ndzozo**, here tonight. Since the YearBeyond programme initiative was launched in 2015, it has supported over 10 000 young people to their pathway into work and further studies.

Last year we had 3 000 youth enrolled in this programme in the Western Cape.

It aims to provide unemployed youth, between the ages of 18 and 25, with meaningful work experience. Its success is being noticed. It scooped the annual 2023 Social Justice Bridge Builder Award that recognises individuals or programmes for their unwavering dedication to social justice and unity.

Our Chrysalis Academy is another path to success offered to at-risk youth. Since 2019, 1522 young people have graduated from Chrysalis. Young people like **Thando Stimela**, who I visited at his own company earlier this year and who is here tonight, embody the step-up that Chrysalis can give!

A thriving economy is an inclusive one. Welcoming more youth into the province's labour market will require skills development. Between April and the end of November 2023, targeted skills programmes, run by the Western Cape Department of Economic Development and Tourism, in partnership with the private sector, resulted in 2 772 jobs for previously unemployed young people. We are not only helping to skill young people for their futures, but we are also assisting in connecting them to economic opportunities.

We recently launched the Getting YOU to Work project, an exciting new initiative that offers jobseekers free travel to job interviews using Golden Arrow Bus Services. This programme will make it easier for young people to become active economic citizens.

### **Mobility**

A functioning public transport system is critical for economic growth and safety.

Our Mobility Department is helping to move our province forward. Established last year – it is driving our efforts to – among others – make our roads and public transport nodes safe and efficient for our residents.

Passenger rail was once the backbone of our economy. It now lies in ruins due to a failed national government.

Again, the devolution of rail responsibility to the province and municipalities will make the difference.

We have made a difference with public transport in George via our Go George Service. Our Mobility team have spearheaded this project for ten years, developing a world class scheduled bus service covering over 150km on 34 routes, employing almost 400 staff members, and operating four million passenger trips annually covering 70% of households in George

A key component of mobility in the province, is the minibus taxi industry. They provide a critical service in enabling our citizens to get to work, school, hospital and more. Our relationship at times is difficult but we recognize the value this industry brings to our residents,

With this vision in mind, we will continue to work with the industry to ensure that that they provide safe and reliable public transport that operates lawfully. Violent strikes – like the one called by SANTACO last August - served no constructive purpose. The bloodshed and lives lost that accompanied the strike were appalling and caused untold harm and trauma to our citizens.

It is only through meaningful engagement with the interests and, more importantly, the safety and dignity of commuters front of mind that we will be able to find common ground to address the issues the taxi industry raises. I look forward to this industry moving from a minibus taxi industry to a fully-fledged mobility industry. For rail to work properly they are going to need to be key partners.

## **A Province of Resilience**

We demonstrate that in the Western Cape Government when confronted with challenges and stresses, “polycrises, we do not simply stick our heads in the sand like our counterparts at national government. We face them head-on, we innovate, and we learn how to do better.

One of the clear commitments of this government to our future is to ensure that we make provision for emergencies. That is why we have committed to topping up our Asset Finance Reserve and Budget Facility for Infrastructure. This prudent financial management served us well during COVID-19 and recent disasters, and we know that with services collapsing around the country we will need these reserves to step in when the next crisis hits.

## **Power to the people**

2023 was yet another challenging year for our country, one marked by perennial, stubborn adversities and issues: the energy crisis, which continues to wreak economic havoc and social destruction; intolerably high levels of unemployment and crime that rob too many of our citizens of hope and dignity; and increasingly severe weather events caused by the climate crisis.

2023 saw the worst load shedding to date. This crisis continues to severely hamper the Western Cape's economic growth, exacerbating unemployment and impacting on our residents' safety and dignity. The Western Cape is estimated to have lost between R48.6 billion and R61.2 billion in real GDP since load shedding was first thrust upon us. In 2022, the real GDP lost to the Western Cape was estimated at R8.2 billion. The estimated cost of load shedding on the Western Cape's economy, in stage 4, amounts to R43 million per day, and at higher stages, even more!

But the Western Cape is well on its way to becoming the first load shedding-free province in the country. Just under R7 billion in total is being spent over the next 3 years to make the Western Cape energy resilient. This amount is made up of just over R1 billion from the province, R3.9 billion from the City of Cape Town and R1.9 billion being spent by other municipalities across the province to enable the private sector and households to find solutions.

We are seeing a solar and wind energy surge in our province being led by private households and businesses, like:

- three 75MW solar farms will be based in the Touws River area;
- Atlantis Foundries and their Energy Partner are working together on an extensive embedded solar initiative;
- Prescient Investment Management and H1 Holdings are investing in a solar project that will be radiating power into our system next year. This could power up to 100 000 homes.

And thousands of households have invested in solar and battery solutions – the latest estimates are that at least 6 GWs have been added.

Cape Town has already announced that they will pay cash for your excess energy and our other municipalities are busy trying to do the same.

We are building an energy ecosystem to bring more private sector role players into the fold to help us overcome the power crisis. Phelan Energy is one such company that is tapping into the green hydrogen (GH2) sector. Welcome here tonight **Rikus Roos**, the Land and Environmental Manager of Phelan Energy.

It is investing R47 billion in a green hydrogen plant in Saldanha Bay, harnessing that region's abundance of solar and wind energy to explore this exciting new energy space in our province. We remain committed to working with other regions and our neighbours – the Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and Namibia - in further ~~exploiting~~ exploring the potential of GH2.

There is no safety nor dignity for our residents when entire areas are plunged into darkness for hours at a time. During higher stages of power outages, health is potentially further impacted when sewerage systems and water treatment facilities are affected. We have worked tirelessly to ensure that our hospitals and clinics can operate during load shedding. 193 of our health facilities have generator capacity to continue essential services during loadshedding, 9 of our clinics have completed inverter installations, and 10 of our hospitals have been exempted from up to Stage 6 load shedding.

Numerous municipalities' efforts to ameliorate mass power outages are also well under way. Twenty-five municipalities have seen a remarkable surge in embedded generation installations.

Hessequa Municipality, with the support of the WCG, is implementing a R210 million renewable energy project over the next three years which will eventually make the town of Riversdale load shedding-free, - the first town in the province to beat rolling power cuts - improving the quality of life for more than 22 000 residents.

The City of Cape Town, George, Mossel Bay and Saldanha Bay are also investing vast sums of money in our collective fight to achieve energy resilience. Here in the Paarl, the municipality is investing heavily in ensuring that all its traffic lights work during load shedding.

While we work on long-term solutions, we are taking steps in the interim to ameliorate the impact of relentless power cuts on residents.

This includes the load shedding emergency relief grant of R89 million, which we announced early in 2023, to provide generators to municipalities to protect critical services, like drinking water and water treatment. These generators proved invaluable during the recent 2-week Eskom outage in the Karoo. Thank you to our municipalities for enabling us to keep water flowing, our hospitals and schools open during this Eskom-outage. We worked closely with Eskom during this period and I want to acknowledge **Mbulelo Yedwa** and **Trish da Silva** of Eskom here tonight, that we worked closely with to bring the Karoo back online.

We have also handed out load shedding relief packs to vulnerable groups, starting with facilities funded by the Western Cape Department of Social Development. **Nozuko Conjwa** from the Nonceba Community Centre that we visited last year is here with us tonight. This year we will distribute these packs to learners in our lower quintile schools.

### **The national-government fiscal crisis**

As we enter a new year, we unfortunately add another crisis to our list: the catastrophic national fiscal crisis. Our country has been pushed to the edge of a cliff once again. National government's mismanagement of our finances will have a significant impact on our residents, especially the most vulnerable.

This is happening at a time when we desperately need policy certainty around our finances, something which is crucial for any government that cares for its citizens and is serious about delivering services. It is in Pretoria, in the Union Buildings where this calamity was created.

When faced with catastrophic cuts to budgets for our frontline services, we will do everything that we can to protect services like health, education and social services.

It is on this frontline that we face the brunt of these cuts in our quest to serve our residents. These cuts are forcing us to have fewer doctors and nurses for an increasing population, few teachers for bigger classes and fewer social workers for more critical assistance in our communities.

It is for nurses like **Elanza Williams** and **Farida Cloete** and medics like **Maudrene Zwaan**, here tonight that we are fighting for.

While we should be doubling down and intensifying our efforts to grow our economy, create more jobs and reduce poverty – as we have been steadily doing in the Western Cape – so much of what we have achieved is at risk due to this crisis.

We have declared an inter-governmental dispute as a last resort. This was not an easy decision to make. However, it is necessary to challenge national government's unconscionable and irrational move to force provinces to fund its deficit.

We have a responsibility to our residents to ensure that they continue to get quality services and so we will fight tooth and nail to get the R1.1 billion owed to us, because without this money we will have less doctors, nurses and teachers in our clinics, hospitals and schools.

But even when faced with these overwhelming challenges, the Western Cape Government still stands tall, giving hope to our residents and hope for what is possible for South Africa.

We will need to innovate, and become nimbler; simply put, we must do more with less.

Many see our province as a beacon of hope, where our residents are given the opportunities they need to live their lives with dignity. We are fighting for our citizens and their rights.

We are fighting for entrepreneurs like **Chef Lungelo Masiza, Danver Windvogel and Denver Adonis** – who join us this evening. Lungelo runs two businesses and aims to grow them to employ more people, and Danver and Denver run Huguenot Fine Chocolates. Lungelo, Danver and Denver are the embodiment of our province's entrepreneurial spirit, and we must look out for the thousands of small and medium-sized businesses in our province.

We are fighting for our school learners who deserve dignified places of teaching and learning. We are in the corner of our healthcare workers who make shrinking budgets work for their patients.

We are striving every day to be better and do more, because we know we can and must.

### **Responding to the Climate Crisis**

With each year that passes, we are seeing the indisputable evidence of the impact of the climate crisis.

During winter we face flooding and in summer we confront wildfires. Our firefighters like **Calvin Denysen** and **Anda Tiko**, here tonight have responded to over 4 000 fires this summer already.

However, with the steady hand of the Provincial Disaster Management Centre and through the expertise of our indefatigable and professional emergency personnel we have developed extraordinary crises' expertise. And we could not do this without our partnerships with our citizens and NGOs – THANK YOU to people like **Trevor Abrahams**, the MD of Working on Fire and **Antoinette Jini**, your GM, here tonight, for what you do under often difficult circumstances.

After heavy rains and floods battered parts of the province last September, I wanted to see for myself the extent of the disaster. I toured the Breede Valley with a group of local farmers, and I was astounded at the damage. If ever you needed proof of the saying “’n Boer maak a plan” playing itself out, there it was! Farmers jumped into action to ensure gravel roads could be used again so that communities could be reconnected and relief aid to reach those who needed it.

Many of our local governments are investing heavily in ensuring that they are better prepared for whatever nature or humankind throws at it.

The Langeberg Municipality just this month officially opened a new R17 million fire station in Roberston. Up until now the town and surrounds had relied on a satellite fire facility based in Ashton. With this state-of-the-art facility, response times to fires and emergencies will be drastically cut, saving lives and property.

The decisions we make today will impact and inform our future. In all we do we must plan adequately, not just for the next 5 years but for the next 50 or 100 years. We must prepare ourselves better for the pressures that come with running our province.

By 2040 the Western Cape’s population will have grown to 10 million people.

A fast-growing population and rapid urbanisation have a direct influence on our natural environment, and long-term planning is essential to shape the way our towns and cities will look like in the future. We must ensure that we build our province to withstand these pressures and others that we do not currently understand or know.

This is why we are investing in creating government capacity to plan and think for the future and what changes that technology, like artificial intelligence, will mean for us.

Our 15-year Integrated Drought and Water Response Plan is another way in which we are planning better for the needs of today and the future.

If anything, the energy crisis has taught us that we need to constantly keep one eye on the demands of the future while working on the needs of the present.

This seemingly perpetual state of crises reminds me of how we tackled Covid-19. We had to think on our feet.

But with our data and evidence-led philosophy and approach we prevailed. Looking back on my term innovation was integral to our province’s world-class Covid-19 response. We built the biggest Covid-19 field hospital in Africa within just 6 weeks at the beginning of the global lockdown and opened ‘Hospitals of Hope’ at Brackengate and in Mitchells Plain. And we delivered thousands of parcels of medicine directly to people’s homes.

We launched the COVID-19 public-facing dashboard. By the end of 2021, the site had received over 3 million views from 167 countries. The dashboard won the Africa Tech Award for Best use of Technology in the Public Sector 2020.

### **Putting our Residents’ needs first through clean governance**

The people of the Western Cape and South Africa deserve a government that works and operates transparently and openly, spending their money wisely and prudently.

The power of good governance has profound and far-reaching repercussions that help enable job creation. It is therefore a key building block of economic growth.

For the 2022/23 financial year all 14 Western Cape Government Departments and its provincial entities received unqualified audits from the Auditor General, the best audit results in the country.

Leading from the front, Provincial Treasury received 9 consecutive clean audit outcomes, demonstrating a deep-seated commitment to good governance.

An ethical government is a responsive government. Good governance permeates our entire government. Our deep commitment to clean governance is reflected in the quality of services we offer our residents.

Amid severe financial constraints and a tough economic climate, we must turn every Rand around. We will not tolerate corruption. We will not stand for financial mismanagement.

We as the Western Cape Government are spending your money responsibly, always with our residents in mind.

I have every confidence in our departments and entities to keep innovating and working smarter with less.

This track record of good service delivery and fiscal discipline is not going unnoticed. The private sector and international partners are paying attention and want to do business with the Western Cape. They can see tangible evidence of our commitment to our citizens and the economy.

As much as our excellent track record of good governance has helped ensure our province succeeds in delivering for our citizens, I urge our residents hold us accountable to do strive to do better every day.

### **Coalitions of corruption**

I remain gravely concerned about the mismanagement of some of our municipalities. Our residents deserve better than mountains of refuse left uncollected for weeks, sewage flowing down streets and ongoing water supply disruptions!

These scenes of collapsing service delivery are a blight on our province's solid track record of good governance.

The Western Cape Government is assisting struggling municipalities. We must first help them to help themselves. Where there is dysfunction, we must as the provincial government, intervene but at the same time respecting that this is an independent sphere of government that was elected by those residents, who must ultimately hold their municipalities accountable.

### **An Innovative Government**

Innovation, a key value of our government, is built into everything we do. Innovation informs and improves our service delivery capabilities. Through our data-based, evidence-led approach we are constantly improving how we do things. From policing to healthcare to education, we have proven that this reliance on data, evidence and technology is working, streamlining services and better utilising our resources, which are under considerable strain, to have the most impact to benefit the people of our province.

A key example of how we use data and evidence is the Provincial Economic Review and Outlook and Municipal Economic Review and Outlook. These documents give us an extensive and holistic understanding of where we are excelling and where we need to improve in critical areas, among them energy, job creation and safety.

Our healthcare system is another example of innovation and partnership. Our partnerships with the universities in this province and commitment to excellence and innovation mean that we host the only public sector hospitals on the African continent that do robotic surgeries.

The TeleICU pilot project launched by our Department of Health and Wellness is a groundbreaking initiative between George Regional and Groote Schuur Hospitals. It is connecting clinicians in these facilities' respective ICUs through a robotic device, called "Georgie" and is expanding access to real-time critical care expertise and improved decision-making. This means that a specialist from Groote Schuur can assist with critical care services in George, allowing scarce resources to be allocated elsewhere.

### **Conclusion**

The late Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu once said, "Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness."

This "light" shines here in the Western Cape.

We live in uncertain times. But here in the Western Cape, we do everything possible to create certainty, build hope, bolster our collective resilience and effect change for you our residents.

So much threatens to divide us. We cannot let this happen. We must all continuously ask: what unites us? What brings us together? For me it is our shared vision of a prosperous Western Cape where there are jobs in every household; where people feel safe; where businesses can thrive; where we all feel a sense of dignity and worth which we can be proud of.

A prosperous Western Cape helps make a stronger South Africa.

Too many of our citizens are suffering. They look to us for help; and we will step up and step in to offer them hope, dignity and worth in whatever way we can.

We are demonstrating to the rest of the country and the world what is possible when a government such as ours does not take its residents from granted.

But we must brace ourselves for challenges. Tightening budgets and a rise in service delivery pressures will require us to become more agile and smarter with dwindling resources.

I deliver my State of the Province Address at a critical time in our province and country's history.

This year we will return to the polls. Our citizens will exercise their sacrosanct and hard-fought right to vote. But as important as the right to vote is, it is as critical that we carefully consider the consequences of how we vote.

I believe our voters will choose a path of hope.