
WEDNESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2026

STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS

The sign † indicates the original language and [] directly thereafter indicates a translation.

10 The House met at 18:30.

The SPEAKER: Before we start the proceedings, I will allow an opportunity for the rendering of the National Anthem by George Locles, Unjili Brink, Dylan Windvogel, Virgil Pyl and Jessness Pyl. Members and guests, I request that you remain silent during the rendition of the National Anthem.

Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika

Maluphakanyisw' uphondo lwayo,

Yizwa imithandazo yethu,

20 Nkosi sikelela, thina lusapho lwayo.

Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso,

O fedise dintwa la matshwenyeho,

O se boloke, O se boloke setjhaba sa heso, Setjhaba sa South Afrika - South Afrika.

Uit die blou van onse hemel
Uit die diepte van ons see
Oor ons ewige gebergtes
Waar die kranse antwoord gee,

Sounds the call to come together
And united we shall stand
Let us live and strive for freedom
In South Africa our land

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The SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

The hon Speaker took the Chair and read the prayer.

The SPEAKER: You may be seated. Order. I want to take this opportunity to welcome our esteemed guests to the Sitting today. Please note that for the Sitting, the Standing Rules of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament will apply and further in compliance with the powers, privileges and immunities of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures Act of 2004, this entire hall, including
20 all visitor seating areas and all facilities will be regarded as the precincts of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament.

Before we proceed, I would like to provide guidance on the Rules applicable to this Sitting. Today we have hon members present in this hall together with the Presiding Officers and the Table Staff. Allow me to highlight some of the

important housekeeping Rules for the Sitting. Today's Sitting shall be governed by the Standing Rules and in instances where the Rules cannot be applied, the ruling by the Presiding Officer is final. The quorum requirements for the Sitting of the House are provided for in the Constitution and the Standing Rules.

The Sergeant at Arms will record members' attendance. Members who are present in this hall have all the privileges and immunities imparted by law. Hon members, unless there is an indication of unanimous concurrence, voting
10 will be confined to members present in the House and who are entitled to cast their votes in accordance with our Standing Rules. Members who are considered out of order by the Presiding Officer will have their microphones muted and will be called to order.

When an hon member wishes to raise a point of order, such an hon member may address the Presiding Officer as normal but must mute his or her microphone when he or she has completed speaking. The hon members are kindly requested to ensure that their microphones are unmuted when they are recognised by the Presiding Officer and to mute the microphones when they
20 have finished speaking. I kindly request that those who are not members of the House to observe the decorum of the House.

And for the purposes of this Sitting, language interpreting services are available by using the devices at your disposal. If guests require an interpreting device, please raise your hand and an attendant will assist you.

Officials are available to assist hon members who are experiencing challenges with accessing the interpreting services during the Sitting. The Secretary and her administration will ensure that there is a dedicated technical support at all times during the Sitting.

I would like to announce to our Muslim members, guests and officials that Iftar, the time to break your fast, is at 19.16 today. Provision has been made for you to break your fast and the prayer room is available and located off the foyer on your left-hand side. Hon members, I have to announce that in
10 accordance with Rule 14, Sub-Rule 1 of the Standing Rules, today, the 25th of February 2026, at 18.30, has been determined as the date and the time for the Premier's State of the Province Address. Hon members, this Sitting is meant specifically for the purpose of affording the Premier the opportunity to deliver the State of the Province Address and on this occasion, no business
20 other than the address by the Premier will be entertained.

I also wish to remind members that the debate on the address will take place tomorrow, on the 26th of February 2026, when members will have an opportunity to engage fully and debate the Premier's opening address and the
20 Premier will reply to the debate thereafter. Hon members and guests, I now afford the hon Premier of the Western Cape, hon Premier Alan Windy, the opportunity to address the House. Hon Premier.

The PREMIER: Hon Speaker and Deputy Speaker, hon Cabinet Ministers, hon Leader of the Opposition, hon Leaders of Opposition Parties, hon Members of

the Western Cape Provincial Parliament, The Leadership of the Griqua National Conference of South Africa, Paramount Chief Alan Andrew Le Fleur and Chief Cedrick Sidney van Eeden, Members of the Consular Corps, Heads of Department, Executive Mayors and Deputy Mayors, Municipal Managers, Distinguished Guests, Abantu baseNtshona Koloni, Mense van die Wes-Kaap, People of the Western Cape, welkom, wamkelekile, welcome.

At the tip of Africa there is a place where the human spirit is as vibrant as the landscape itself. It is a melting pot of history where culture echoes through
10 colourful streets and the smell of wood smoke from a *gallyblik* drifts across the evening air. At the tip of Africa there is a place where the aroma of the fynbos becomes an instant memory. It is a scent that tells you, before you have even seen the peaks of the Twelve Apostles or the beaches of the Garden Route, that you have arrived somewhere that feels like the beginning of the world.

At the tip of Africa there is a place where Karoo nights reveal a sky so thick with stars you feel you could reach out and touch the Milky Way. At the tip of Africa there is a place where culinary flavours serve as a map of shared
20 histories, from enjoying a Cape Malay curry shared in the vibrant streets of the Bo-Kaap to a rustic farm lunch in the valleys of the Overberg. This is our Western Cape, where *Weskus kreef* lands up on lunchtime braais, where bunches of grapes become world-class wines, and where rural roads take you from valleys to mountaintops.

This is our home and it is a special place that becomes part of the fibre of our beings as its dust settles under our skin. This home of ours is the birthplace of ancient innovation and culture, it is also the cutting edge of technology, we know this as Silicon Cape. There is a collective energy here that refuses to stand still – an energy found in Cape Town’s fintech boardrooms and in the grit of software developers in the Black River Parkway. It is a place that we are privileged to call our home.

10 A State of the Province is a moment in time, a snapshot of the year that was and a peering into the year ahead. It is about the work of government. It is about accounting to the legislature and it is accounting to our residents. But tonight, hon Speaker, I want it also to be a unifying cry for oneness, for togetherness, for our humanity. So much of the world as we know it is being shaken up by growing divisions and polarisation, both locally and abroad. I see politics built on separation and otherness. I see politics built on anger and vitriol, often driven by disinformation and amplified by midnight keyboard warriors.

20 Tonight, I make this call for 2026 and beyond, let us prioritise genuine and meaningful acts of kindness. Kindness that brings people together and lifts people up, that greets a stranger, that offers words of support, that connects one and all. Over the many years that I have been in the Western Cape and in Western Cape politics, I have seen so much change. But one thing remains the same, you, the people of this great province, and your resilience and kindness.

The last few years have been tough for many people across our country, South Africa. Increasing financial pressures, failing infrastructure and a service delivery system, soaring costs of living and fewer jobs, crime is running rampant with the scourge of gangsterism, extortion and gender-based violence tearing apart lives, families and communities. It is becoming harder to get ahead or simply stay afloat. It is now more important than ever that every sphere of government works tirelessly to turn the economic tide.

10 Hon Speaker, since the formation of the Government of National Unity, we are starting to turn that tide. We are turning a corner. The country has been taken off the grey list. Fuel prices are coming down. So is inflation. Our inflation rate is at a 21-year low. And the Rand is stronger than it has been for many years. Hon Speaker, there are green shoots of economic revival, and these are most welcome. But, hon Speaker, here in the Western Cape, economic growth doubled over the last five years.

Growth projections show the Western Cape growing even faster in 2026, well above the national expectations. To illustrate this, nearly 90 percent of all
20 jobs created in South Africa over the last five years were created here in the Western Cape. These are net jobs, 90 percent of all net jobs. That means, of the 404,712 total net jobs created ...[intervenes]

The SPEAKER: Hon Premier, my apologies. Can I just, please take your seat? Can I please remind the members or the guests in the gallery, or invited

guests, that you may not participate in the proceedings of the House. So Honourable Premier, my apologies. I just thought it is important to get that right at the beginning.

The PREMIER: Thank you, hon Speaker, I thought the clapping was quite nice, but I will leave that to the hon members. Thank you very much, hon Speaker.

So getting back on track. That means 404 712 total net jobs created in the
10 last five year, 360 347 of them come from this province, the Western Cape.
To put it another way, for every 10 people that got a job over the last five
years in our country, nine of them came from this province.

Hon Speaker, we are determined to do even more, because at the tip of Africa
there is a place where we get things done. To me success is simple. It is a
government that works for you at every stage of your life. This is a vision that
I believe all of us, regardless of political affiliation or ideological standpoint,
should be working towards. It is our young people starting well and being
afforded every opportunity to grow up and be healthy and strong. It is a
20 family sitting around a table sharing a meal, that they can comfortably afford,
in the dignity of their own home. It is about an adult resident living healthy,
productive and independent lives. Our residents enjoying their final years
with dignity and peace.

That is the vision that everyone of us should be striving for. It is a safe

neighbourhood where children are free to play cricket and hockey in clean streets, supported by a caring community. It is a functional municipality with excellent services, infrastructure is maintained and corruption is not tolerated. At the tip of Africa there is a place with a thriving economy and even more jobs.

Hon Speaker, our apex priority, growth and jobs. Growth and jobs are the cornerstone of that vision, because nothing fixes a life like a job, nothing builds dignity like a job, nothing puts food on your table like a job, and as I
10 always say, hon Speaker, nothing stops a bullet like a job.

93 000 new jobs were created in this province in the last quarter alone.

Unemployment in the Western Cape is now down to 18,1%, the lowest in South Africa and vastly below the national unemployment average of 31,4%.

[Applause.]

Now, hon Speaker – †ek sien die gehoor is baie gehoorsaam. [I see the audience is very obedient.] [Laughs] Hon Speaker, 18% - I mean a friend of mine sent me a note when I was celebrating the 18% unemployment rate, and
20 he said to me there is not many politicians in the world that would celebrate an 18% unemployment rate, and that is true, because 18% is just way too high. 18% is something that no politician should celebrate, but in our country and in our province unemployment is a big issue for so many people, and for me and our province we celebrated when we got it below 20% and then sustained that below 20%.

So when it comes to 19% I get quite excited, and when it drops to 18% I get even more excited, and now, to the hon members of my Cabinet, DG and the officials, 10% must surely be the next horizon. We will keep pushing for better numbers.

Hon Speaker, 48 000 of those new jobs were in trade, including hospitality.

That is a hotel concierge in Oudtshoorn who can now buy his daughter a new school uniform. That is a new shop assistant in Bredasdorp who can feed her
10 family.

22 000 new jobs were in agriculture. That is a grape picker in Worcester who can now buy herself a new dress. That is a cannery worker in Ashton who can buy a bus ticket to visit his mom in Beaufort West.

22 000 new jobs were created in the construction industry. That is a quantity surveyor in Plettenberg Bay who can buy his first car, or a carpenter in Hermanus who can put a deposit down on his first home.

20 Hon Speaker, there were 13 000 new jobs in manufacturing, and so that is a welder in Saldanha Bay who can buy his son a new soccer ball or send his daughter to trade school. These jobs numbers are often made possible by business growth and good governance. It is a partnership between government and business.

Since 2022 the number of small businesses have grown by 143 119. I will say it again, after 2022 the new number of small businesses in this provinces went up by 143 119. That is 55% growth in SMMEs in this province, and that compared to only an 18% growth in South Africa. In this province more entrepreneurs want to take risk and we absolutely support that.

The Western Cape Government supports this growth by cutting red tape by providing tailored business support. Our SMME Accelerator Support programme partners with the Johannesburg Stock Exchange – thanks, hon
 10 Minister – to strengthen the investment readiness of small businesses. The programme recruited over 200 businesses with funding readiness support that matched 115 of these businesses directly with a range of funders over the past two years.

We have launched the inaugural TechTalks series, where 150 businesses obtained practical guidance on technology adoption, notably artificial intelligence, helping small businesses harness innovation for growth. This government is always innovating.

20 Our Department of Economic Development and Tourism, under the leadership of hon Minister Ivan Meyer, is spearheading the establishment of the first commercial Drones & UAV testing sandbox op die Weskus. Baie dankie, agb Minister, hierdie gee die geleentheid vir al nuwe maatskappye wat drone tegnologie gebruik. Nie net vir landbou, maar vir die ekonomie, vir veiligheid. Daar is soveel geleenthede, [Thank you very much, Hon. Minister,

this provides an opportunity for all new companies that use drone technology. Not only for agriculture, but for the economy, for safety. There are so many opportunities,] and we see it happening around the world, so let us create the right ecosystem here for those businesses to grow.

In aerospace industry, which sometimes I get shocked at when I look at these numbers, 20% of all satellites circumnavigating our planet have some component from the Cape. 20% around this planet of ours, something comes from the Cape Province, from the Western Cape. It is quite unbelievable.

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The Western Cape has a booming boatbuilding industry where we produce vessels with cutting edge tech. So it is not just satellites, it is boats.

The Western Cape is also front-and-centre in driving the revitalisation of the country's ailing logistics sector. Our government fully supports Operation Vulindlela as a critical national reform programme to unlock economic growth, create jobs and modernise this country's economy.

20

We welcome the measures that will relax competition rules for the country's rail and ports network. We will play our part to enable private sector participation in these ports, within our rail system, because that is how we will become more efficient, that is how we will beat other regions in competitiveness. We have to get that part right and that is why we are so fully in support of Vulindlela. The Western Cape Government will welcome private operators and investors into our ports with open arms.

Our Mobility Department, under hon Minister Isaac Sileku, has expanded the role of the Ports Project Management Unit, the PMU. It was initially created just for supporting Cape Town or Cape Town Port. It is now encompassing Saldanha Port and Mossel Bay Port. This will enable our province-wide freight coordination ecosystem, and the railway tracks of government will continue to advance the Freight Rail Revitalisation Framework that will link the Overberg to our ports, and, hon Minister, I saw that you have just had an announcement with the working group. I thank you for that. It shows you do not just meet with people, bring them together, that action comes after that, and that is exactly what we need to get right in our province.

Hon Minister, I also, along with you and as I am sure so many residents of Mitchells Plain, celebrate the Central Line being opened again. [Applause.] That, along with PRASA, we thank them, because that is how you bring people to jobs, children or learners to school and how you relieve congestion on our roads.

Building on the success of the Jobseekers Travel Voucher, another project coming from your department and the programme in Cape Town, I am delighted to announce that this will expand here in George this year, including the residents of [Applause.] Thembaletu, Pacaltsdorp, Blanco and Lawaaikamp, and perhaps those of you that do not know what this is. A Jobseeker Voucher is where a young person gets a voucher, 10 trips at least, on a bus system, where they can go to an interview, they have got the

transport paid for. If they get a job, the first week they can go to work without borrowing money to get repaid when they get their first salary cheque at the end of the week. That voucher gives a massive opportunity, and I think it is going to make a big difference for young people here in this region.

Hon Speaker, it is fantastic that this Jobseeker Voucher is also going to be included in our Go George service, and looking at the numbers, 6 million passenger trips in the last year, and I think that is outstanding. This is one of the most utilised integrated public transport systems in South Arrica now. The
10 bus service now operating to Thembaletu and it will be expanded this year to Uniondale as well. Thank you very much for that.

Hon Speaker, I must now get to other opportunities specifically for young people and I now talk about the roll-out of our free Wi-Fi hotspots. In this province we now have 1 600 free Wi-Fi hotspots. In this municipality there are 60 free Wi-Fi hotspots, and those 60 hotspots give citizens access to 6 Gigabytes of data free every month.

It was really amazing yesterday to attend the, or to pop into our mobile e-
20 Centre, and the mobile e-Centre is a business, it was built by artisans right here in this very municipality in George, and what really stood out for me was the number of young people who were making use of this facility.

When I first got there, there must have been 60, 70 young people queuing outside the e-Centre to get in front of a computer, to get free Wi Fi

downloads, to be able to get their CV printed. That for me was really amazing, and, DG, I really am happy today to announce that we are going to be building two more of those buses. So we will have three in the fleet coming up in this next year, and that takes these opportunities to the furthest most remote points of our province, where we do not have broadband connectivity. Where this bus can go and make services available for our citizens.

Hon Speaker, I also want to say that in the ability to grow our economy in this
10 last year, we had a really successful inaugural Western Cape investment conference, and we had a multi-billion rand deal book, because I remember in the discussion with hon Minister Meyer, that we are not going to just go there emptyhanded, we are going to have a book of projects that enable investors to find tangible investment opportunities, and, you know, opportunities from a deal book have to then end up in financial close, have to get deals and due diligence done, and I am happy that your department has reported to me that there are five projects now nearing financial close just a few months after that conference.

20 One of them a R600 million Green Hydrogen investment. One is a R1,8 billion manufacturing sector investment; a R105 million Tech industry investment; a R250 million Green Economy electric vehicle investment; and a R400 million solar energy investment. These investment are what create jobs. These investments are on the back of that good governance, that business confidence and thank you very much, I know that everybody was worried that we were

going to call another investment conference within a year, but I think within two years we can probably call it again.

At the same time, hon Speaker, we are seeing massive investment into our cities and towns, with over R9 billion invested last year just in the CBD of the City of Cape Town. A further R24 billion set to be invested in mixed used development at Granger Bay, next to the Water Front, or part of the Water Front expansion, and we are seeing this investment not only in Cape Town, but also across our municipalities.

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Last year the value of building plans passed in the Western Cape grew to almost R35 billion, the highest in the country. Gauteng, a double the size population of this province and was a double the size economy of this province, on managed R28,2 billion.

So it shows you that the system are working, the planning departments are working, the plans are getting approved and they are being approved on the back of business confidence, because people are applying to have plans passed and make investments.

20

It is not only investments that are growing, but our exports too. The Western Cape has recorded a 49% increase in total exports over three years, from R43,1 billion to R64,1 billion. Next week, through our trade and investment agency, Wesgro, the Western Cape will be hosting a Made in the Cape Buyers' programme. This will be at the CTICC, where our product

manufacturers can actually meet buyers from around the world, and this enables us to get our products onto shelves across the world.

Through our Department of Economic Development and Tourism we are actively exploring other export markets across the world, from Africa to Europe, the far East and the Middle East. We are the jobs province. People move here for better services, better delivery and for economic opportunity.

We welcome investors, risk takers and opportunity-seekers. It is this growth
10 that pours into communities, providing jobs and livelihoods. At the tip of Africa this is a place where growth enables development. The Western Cape is working at getting things done.

Hon Speaker, tourism, it is another powerful economic driver in our province. It has been yet another bumper tourist season with over 11 million two-way passengers through the Cape Town International Airport in 2025. Cape
Town's International Airport had the busiest December on record. We are now seeing more than 200 international flights touching down every single week in Cape Town.

20

We look forward to ACSA getting to work on upgrading the terminal buildings. That could be up to an R11 billion increase in, or investment into those building, and this is on the back of the Air Access Project that we have been running for years now with Wesgro in partnership with the City of Cape Town. We are seeing increased flights out of the US, increased flights out of

South Amerika, Sao Paolo, Atlanta and of course across Africa.

We are equally excited about the planning progress not only of Cape Town International, but also the Winelands Airport, a private sector investment where billions is also being spent on a new airport in the Winelands region, and this will inject far more opportunities into the economy, create a more competitive space for airlift and it will just see our economy go to the next level.

10 Hon Speaker, it is not only in Cape Town, it is here in George. The local airport recorded its best year yet in 2025 with almost 1 million two-way passengers, which is fuelling the local economies of George and the surrounding towns.

Hon Speaker, we believe in data and evidence that enables us to make decisions, but it also enables businesses to make decisions, and one of the data points coming out of this Festive Season or holiday season, that really stood out for me, was data that comes from one of the payment providers, Yoco, also a tech company homegrown, an entrepreneur that built a company
20 that I think is going to rival many financial companies across this continent.

Now their data showed that during December 2025 Cape Town, Stellenbosch and Plettenberg Bay, the City and two smaller cities, they accounted for 67% of all international visitor payments across the country. So they measured across South Africa. Those three municipalities, in those three municipalities

67% of all credit card payments from international clients, with R500 million during that period flowing into those local businesses in those towns. That creates growth, opportunity and more jobs.

This is a Cape Town pastry chef who gets a permanent role in a new bakery. This is a Stellenbosch wine guide who can pay off his student loan. This is a mountain bike mechanic in Plettenberg Bay who can make the final payment on his business loan and then his business can grow.

- 10 Not only airlift, but on our seas, Cruise Cape Town, powered by Wesgro, has been developing a strong cruise economy in the Western Cape. During the 2024/25 cruise season this sector created over 1 000 jobs and contributed R1,8 billion to the province's GDP, up 18% from the previous year. Passengers spent more, they spent 32% more than the previous seasons, and the cruise line terminal in Cape Town is not only just benefitting Cape Town, because these cruise lines are stopping in Mossel Bay, they are stopping in Hermanus, they are stopping in Saldanha Bay, they are stopping in Plettenberg Bay.
- 20 That is how the cruise line business is not only helping the City, but helping out coastal towns as well.

Hon Speaker, our innovative spirit and drive towards infrastructure-led development hinges on a provincial treasury that is nimble. Thanks to the leadership of hon Minister Deidré Baartman, steering the financial ship, our

Treasury noted that Government spending in the last year saw almost R5 billion flowing to women-owned companies, 34% of all procurement. Let that sink in: R5 billion, 34% of all procurement went to women-owned companies in our Province. And nearly R4 billion flowing to SMMEs. These numbers are an indication of a focused government at work, supporting growth and jobs.

Hon Speaker, while talking about SMMEs and Business, I look across the room and I see Dr Willie Cilliers, and as a Business Chamber leader not only here in George, but across the region, I want to recognise you and all of the Business Chambers in our Province, to say thank you. If we build that partnership between Government and Business, we can only get stronger. We can only understand what those blockages are and that is how you build an economy. This does not just happen! This is slow, incremental progress, working together and it enables a growth environment that is actually making a difference for every single citizen in this Province.

Hon Speaker, growth is also about how infrastructure is invested in. We have a potent growth and spatial redress enabler in infrastructure investment. At the tip of Africa there is a place where cranes dot the skies across cities and towns telling a story of a province that is growing.

In 2025, the construction sector in the Western Cape created 57 341 jobs, a powerful indicator of the confidence in our economy, which saw the value of completed buildings grow by nearly 34%. During April to December 2025

and over and above the 93 000 jobs created in the last quarter, a further 78 000 EPWP job opportunities were created. Specifically, I want to thank hon Minister Simmers for that.

Often, when we put the data out there about the job numbers, I get people coming back and saying, 'those 93 000 new jobs in the last Quarter, they do not really mean anything because they are EPWP jobs.' No, those are jobs in the economy. Those are jobs in the SMME sector and in the formal business sector. On top of that 93 000, you add the other 78 000 opportunities. That is
10 not a fulltime job. We know that, but that is a step up. That is to enable you to learn a skill and be more employable.

Hon Speaker, Infrastructure development and importantly, the maintenance thereof is the backbone of the Western Cape's economy and a foundation for sustainable growth. When we invest in roads, ports, energy, water, and digital networks, we unlock opportunities for businesses to grow, trade to flow, and jobs to be created.

Last year, our Department of Infrastructure (DOI), headed by hon Minister
20 Simmers, convened the first Western Cape Infrastructure Ministerial Committee. This committee is driving the implementation of the Western Cape Infrastructure 2050 Framework. So, the hon Minister has put together a long-term vision and then the committee which brings all of the departments and role players in the economy together to make sure that we are holding everybody to account, and we are actually delivering what we say we are

delivering by when and by whom. This is how we hold everyone to account and you move forward so that you end up with the kind of job numbers that we have.

It helps to create an enabling environment for the establishment of new and innovative partnerships across the three spheres of government and the private sector, selected development finance institutions, and specialised infrastructure agencies. It shows our focus on sustainable futures and this, for all our residents.

10

The Department of Infrastructure has also developed a first-of-its-kind single integrated pipeline of infrastructure projects in the Western Cape to the value of R152 billion, with 52 projects already investment-ready.

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In the coming months, the Department of Infrastructure will launch a roads app and hon Minister, you tabled the draft of it at Cabinet and I am looking forward to that app going live in August, oh, in March, an AI-powered assistant designed to enhance residents' interactions with the Department to further improve the quality of our roads. This is using technology to actually make us even more responsive and able to increase the quality of our already great roads.

Included in Infrastructure is Housing. Dignity is found in many places, but few are more important than a home. We do not just build houses; we are building hope, access and opportunities one brick at a time. At the tip of

Africa there is a place where over 213 000 housing opportunities have been created since we came to government, directly benefiting some 850 000 people.

Following the successful Conradie Park development, which is now in Phase 2, the year ahead will see a further 1 225 residential units completed, bringing safe and dignified housing to more families.

10 What is more is now, with the Department of Infrastructure, the Department of Education and our EduInvest desk at Wesgro, Apex Education has now invested at Conradie Park and now partnered with us, and we now have a new Apex school called Pinelands Apex School. That is really great news. It adds to the already existing school and the number of creché's that are there. It shows you that when you invest, you create an ecosystem and you build a better opportunity for everyone.

20 This was facilitated by EduInvest, a catalytic project powered by Wesgro and the Western Cape Government. If anybody thinks or knows of anybody who wants to invest into private schooling, please use that opportunity. EduInvest is set up for that specific task.

Hon Speaker, the national Minister of Land Reform and Rural Development has committed to the next phase of District Six in partnership with the City of Cape Town, and this I really welcome. The Minister came and agreed last week with the City to take this specific space, District Six, to the next level

and give it that next investment. I also said to the Minister, 'we want to take you to Conradie Park, show you what it looks like because if we cannot just do the next stage of District Six, if we can create real living ecosystems like Conradie Park and develop the rest of District Six in that way, we really create opportunities and we really are correcting the real injustices of the past.'

The Western Cape Government is actively bringing residents close to economic opportunities in the City of Cape Town or in the city centre and the development that we have already announced called the Leeuloop
10 Development: hon Minister, thank you very much. You said you would get it done and you have got it done. This is 341 social housing units. The processes are complete and the construction commences later this year.

The second one that we are making progress on, is Founders' Garden and I see the same energy going into it. These are 1 178 social housing opportunities. Founders' Garden, for those of you who do not know, is between the Artscape and the Convention Centre, right next to the Christian Barnard Hospital. It is a perfect space for specifically affordable housing units. That is also making
20 progress and due to be completed in the bidding process later this year. So, hopefully, we go to construction next year.

In 2025, we delivered over 1000 finance-linked individual subsidies. These are FLISP houses. This comes for first time home buyers who earn less than R22,000 a month. Thank you, hon Minister, we are ramping that up and this

year, we are going to give 3 000 residents in the FLISP process to own their own homes.

Just nearby where we are today, at Ebenhaezer Housing Project in Bitou, which is well underway with the first phase delivering 204 housing opportunities. I see 1 433 which will now be coming in the next phase. This is real dignity here in the Garden Route.

Hon Speaker, we cannot talk about infrastructure here in George without
10 acknowledging the horrific 2024 building collapse. I can now confirm that the South African Police Service have completed their investigation into all aspects of the disaster, including the peer-reviewed report that we handed to the SAPS early last year. The case docket is now with the National Prosecuting Authority for a decision on prosecution. Hon Speaker, after two years, it is time for justice.

An HON MEMBER: When are you doing it?

The PREMIER: When am I doing it? That is the National Prosecuting
20 Authority. [Interjections.] You are welcome to ask the National Prosecuting Authority to come to the ...[Interjections.] come to the Standing Committee. I do not know how they will deal with that, but you are welcome to ask them. [Interjections.]

The SPEAKER: Order!

The PREMIER: Hon Speaker ...[Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Order!

The PREMIER: ...Roads. At the tip of Africa, this is a place with roads that are well-maintained and the envy of other provinces. In 2025, 24 549 kilometres of gravel roads were maintained; and 269 000 square metres of surfaced roads resealed. All these road projects translated to a further 4 645
10 work opportunities, and these were created last year.

We will keep on investing in our roads, with over 2 275 000 square metres of road set for maintenance this year, creating thousands more work opportunities. Thank you, hon Minister.

Our infrastructure push, this year, will gather more momentum with several flagship projects. I am thinking of or I have been told of the further N1 Wingfield Project. That is an R11 billion project and well on its way. The R300 Ring Road, the completion of that, but of course, I saw you visited
20 shortly, I think it was yesterday, the George Western Bypass. These are big road infrastructure investments that actually are forward-looking and will make a big difference for the economy into the future.

Hon Speaker, safety on our roads is critically important which is why our Provincial Law Enforcement teams can be seen working hard across the

province. In February alone, there have been more than 450 integrated vehicle check points with over 70 000 vehicles checked.

And I joined the hon Minister last night or yesterday evening, and what did stand out for me was the number of vehicles stopped that had smooth tyres. Just one thing: smooth tyres. Now, that, is an accident waiting to happen. So, this is where we need responsibility. It is not for our traffic officers to point that out to you. It is for everyone of us to take the responsibility to check our vehicles before we put them on the road. That is how we build a
10 safer province that the hon Minister has to answer on.

Hon Speaker, I can also announce one more thing in this Department's environment which is, and I am sure many of you would have read those reports of how arms and drugs come into this province. There is a report that tells you how the guns come from Namibia down the N7, and that is what fuels the gang warfare that kill our children.

So, this province is going to be procuring two radar scanners. These are going to be mobile scanners that can be placed anywhere in the province. With these scanners, the trucks will drive through and that radar scanner will
20 be able to pick up if there are arms buried underneath the truck somewhere, if there are false compartments. Think of child trafficking, think of moving of illicit traded products. That is what these scanners are going to uncover. This is going to help with our crime fighting capability. So, hon Minister, ...[Applause.] let us get them procured! ...[Applause.]

Hon Speaker, at the tip of Africa there is a place where provincial law enforcement is protecting key industries, such as agriculture. Right now, more so than ever before.

Agriculture in the Western Cape is responsible for about 21% of the national employment in this sector. Both agriculture and agri-processing combined contributed 250 000 jobs last year and grew at 9% higher than in any other province. That is two and a half times the inflation rate. That is how you bring down unemployment. That is how you grow an economy.

10

In 2025, the provincial Department of Agriculture, led by Minister Ivan Meyer, has continued to increase our exports that now go to 78 countries. Our province now accounts for 58% of South Africa's total agricultural exports.

20

As part of this, we also have the ecological infrastructure projects, incorporating river protection works and invasive alien clearing and rehabilitation. Because water and agriculture go together, 16 000 hectares of land which has the potential to augment 113 million cubic metres of water supply. This has been cleared out of our rivers, and this is equivalent to another Berg River Dam. That is how much water these kinds of programmes save us.

Hon Speaker, biosecurity threats and disasters, such as Foot-and-Mouth Disease, pose a serious risk to our farmers and the Western Cape's economy.

In our province, R13,5 billion worth of economy linked directly to the dairy industry and the meat industry. I am not going to say too much about this because I will leave that to hon Minister Meyer tomorrow when he will give nuts and bolts of the plan and what we are working on. We are happy that it has been declared a disaster and in the last two and a half weeks, this province has taken it very seriously. We have put roadblocks up; we have drafted regulation and sent them to the National Department. We have picked up cases. We vaccinate in those areas, in the 10-kilometre radius around, and specifically here in this region.

10

The dairy industry has been impacted, and our vets and our teams have moved in super-fast. I just know that we have got to keep pushing for more regulation, for more management, but I have got no doubt between the two hon Ministers that are actually sitting together there, hon Minister Bredell and hon Minister Meyer, who between the two of them are managing this disaster, that we will get on top of it and protect this industry. We will also then protect food security in this region and those export jobs that it drives.

20

Hon Speaker, our environment is precious, whether it be natural wide-open spaces, farmland, or our inner-city waterways. Climate change and environment are a key component of our place and our economy, and our being.

Addressing climate change is not only an environmental priority, it is also an economic imperative. We see the impact of this crisis that climate change

brings. It has no borders. It does not keep to timetables. Each year, its impact becomes more evident with heavy rains, storm surges, flooding, heat waves, and now, as we are seeing some regions, drought.

Over the last 2 months we have seen areas going from being ravaged by wildfires to washed out by rainstorms. These extreme weather events are driven by climate change. This crisis is undeniable. We were looking, the other day, at the water report, it was actually last night, and 2% was the dam level just two months ago in Swellendam: 2%! At crisis level! Today as I
10 stand here it is at 80%. It can change in two months. Those photographs that you might have seen of the water rushing under the bridge that washed away on the N2 not so long ago or the water rushing under the bridge in Laingsburg. It just shows you: from dry to abundance of water and within a few weeks, it will be back at dry again.

There are some brilliant organisations supporting communities to become resilient in the face of climate change. The Greater Overberg Fire Protection Association supports communities and organisations to develop fire plans and manage risks. The manager, Louise Wessels, is here. Stand up. Thank you,
20 Louise. Thank you for what you do. ...[Applause.] Thank you for how you support the whole Overberg. We are very proud of what you have achieved. We really appreciate it. Thank you.

Hon Speaker, I would also like to recognise the firefighters and people of Mossel Bay and the Garden Route. If we think about the JOC and the

firefighters in this region who spent so much time protecting lives and fighting the devastating fires earlier this year. We see you, we recognise you and we applaud you.

Hon Speaker, this region, like many others across our province, is facing serious water challenges. And just as we acted with urgency to overcome loadshedding, we will bring the same vigour, focus, and energy to securing our water future.

10 At the tip of Africa, there is a place that is on track to secure an additional 310 million cubic metres of water by 2035. To conserve this precious resource, we have invested over R250 million that has enabled local government. Our investment enables local government to invest billions over and above that, into their own water infrastructure.

For example, not so far from here, the Plettenberg Bay desalination plant has been working tirelessly through the holiday season to make sure that they did not run out of water. In George, they have invested into new water systems, dam walls, sewerage systems and more.

20

The Department of Local Government, and Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, under the leadership of hon Minister Bredell, are working hard with stakeholders in every sphere of government to achieve our bold water resilience goals.

The raising of the Clanwilliam dam wall is well underway and once completed, will add another 69.5 million cubic metres of water to the system per year. This will enable thousands of hectares of agriculture, but it will also enable water security for all of those towns downstream.

We are assisting municipalities with large infrastructure projects such as pipeline upgrades in the Overstrand, reservoir construction in Saldanha Bay and increasing the treatment capacity of the water treatment works in Voëlvlei, Swartland.

10

Through our steady and consistent investment in our disaster management network, we have built up a world-class system that can respond to each disaster speedily and professionally.

Hon Speaker, the fire season and fire seasons are getting longer and more costly. The Department of Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning invested over R30 million last year just into fire services and augmentation of aerial firefighting resources. Those are 27 helicopters and spotter planes on standby during this fire season.

20

We have also enabled the purchase of high-impact firefighting vehicles in the Swartland and Bitou Municipalities, and the Garden Route District municipality. But hon Speaker, 97% of all wildfires are started by humans, either through negligence or intentionality. Arsonists or suspects that have started fires, have been arrested in the Drakenstein Municipality region and in

the Overstrand Municipality region.

We must say it and make it clear that arsonists must face the full might of the law. We cannot be putting our men and women who are the heroes, we cannot put their lives at stake every single time when arsonists start fires. We have seen it. These fires run for days and are really, really tough to manage.

Disaster management is made possible by some of the bravest and most dedicated people you will ever meet. Whether they are 'bombing' fires from
10 the air, responding to floods, or helping to rescue people in natural or manmade disasters, these women and men are the first to arrive on the scene and the last to leave.

In the wake of some of the worst fires in the province that we have seen now in years, I would like to recognise the incredible work of the Overberg Fire Services. Tonight, we have the Overberg Fire Chief here, and I see him in full uniform. Reinhard Geldenhuys, can I ask you to perhaps just stand.
...[Applause.] Thank you!

20 And I know that it is difficult to single one person out when so many people across our province have done such amazing things, but hon Minister Bredell keeps my phone very busy with all of the big issues that our province faces and in the last while, probably lots of data points on fires.

What really stands out for me was when the fires were approaching Elim and

the message was: Elim is gone. I saw photographs of people standing with hosepipes on their thatched rooves. We saw these fires just raging all around. I saw the Disaster Team saying, 'we have got to get the biggest, best resources we can find' and I think you call it the Black Hawk helicopter.

With the management of the air support, with the firefighters on the ground, you managed to save that historical village that is so important to us here in the Western Cape. So, you and the whole team: huge gratitude. Thank you very much! ...[Applause.]

10

Hon Speaker, this is just one example during the fire season. I visited the JOC in Mossel Bay after these fires where we lost so many homes and where the firefighters fought day and night, to see what the men and women did during that period. It really is. It is a huge thank you to every single firefighter, to every citizen that supports our firefighters, and this is from Cederberg to Mossel Bay, from Franschhoek to Du Noon and Masiphumelele, to Caledon, to more and more: thank you, thank you!

20

Now, hon Speaker, moving on from fires, I want to move to Energy. At the tip of Africa, there is a place driving energy security for its residents. In the 2025/2026 year, the Department of Local Government committed R46 million to enhance municipal energy security in the Western Cape. Through our provincial Energy Resilience Programme, 819 megawatts had been added. A further 1 000 megawatts last year and coming into this year, busy being added.

The power landscape is changing in the Western Cape, and we are less reliant on Eskom. Sorry, Mr Yedwa, but thank you very much for being here. We are less reliant on Eskom. We are becoming more resilient as we rely on our independent power producers.

Hon Speaker, in the same way that we have addressed our energy challenges, we are seized with the other challenge and that is the safety of our residents.

10 Hon Speaker, the heinous crimes that take place daily are eating away at the fabric of our society. Imagine the anxiety for a mother who is waiting for her child to get home as the sun is beginning to set. Imagine school children walking past bullet-riddled bodies. This is the norm for too many, but this is so, so, so abnormal

Hon Speaker, what I was going to do now is I was going to take out my phone and play a sound clip for you. I was going to play a sound clip for you that was recorded by a member of parliament, Ian Cameron, on the Cape Flats last year, of bullets flying everywhere, of a gang shootout. I was going to put it
20 on full volume and hold it against this microphone so that you could all hear what it is like to live on the Cape Flats where the gangs are running wild.

But in the testing of the mics today and playing those bullets flying, I thought we probably would have had a barrage of police officers running in here. The discussion we had with the team was that I should probably just talk about it.

But maybe you can think about what that would be like. I do not know if we actually can imagine it, but we also thought about those of you who do live in areas like that, and that would probably trigger a massive trauma in you. So, I have just spoken about it. I have just said that is what I would have liked to have done.

But what I would also like to do is hon Speaker, if you would allow me to ask this full House to observe a moment of silence for the men, women, children and babies that have been injured and killed at the hands of criminals in this province. Hon Minister Sileku just sent me a message a short while ago to say that in taxi violence in Atlantis, a 14-year-old school child has just been shot. Can I ask for a moment of silence. Amen. Thank you very much.

The SPEAKER: Please be seated.

The PREMIER: Hon Speaker, the levels of violence in our province, and across the entire country, are literally turning many communities into warzones with long-term consequences that fuel substance abuse, affect our literacy levels, fuel unemployment, and impact mental health. The daily struggle for dignity and opportunity amongst gang gunfire is a national shame.

The cost of crime in South Africa is immense. The entire country is grappling with this cancer, with over 345 people murdered in the this province in January alone.

Over the last 30 years, there has been no real meaningful investment into safety from National Government. No new prisons. No new court houses. No upgrading of the criminal justice system. Nothing meaningful that has dealt an impact or a blow to the horrors that our citizens face.

Hon Speaker, while we are cautiously supportive of the military deployment, it is surely an admission of SAPS' leadership is failing to combat crime effectively.

10

I do welcome it. I have engaged with the Police Minister to say we must learn the lessons from 2019 when the military was deployed. They were deployed for a few months. We saw an initial effect, but we can only use the force multiplier if we do it together. We have got to make sure that SAPS in control has got the intelligence, has got the Gang Unit, has got our local law enforcement, is using the neighbourhood watches and the CPFs, is making sure that all the whole of government is approaching this, the whole of society is approaching this, so that this intervention has traction and has meaning. I hope that the Minister has heard us.

20

I have also said to him that this reform, we want to see the inclusion of regulation change, of law enforcement enabled to investigate crimes, and I have said to him, I have even given him the legislation. We have written it for him. I have said this is the process. It is not about the overall devolution ask. This is about how can we help you with investigations, and we need to

make sure, hon Minister, that this happens. We need to make sure we see this province getting safer.

Because if it does not, if we do not see the movement, then we will have no option but to institute court action. We will have no option but to go the full intergovernmental dispute process, because it is unacceptable. SAPS is underfunded. SAPS does not have the resources that they need. When I came into power as the Premier, when I was elected in 2019, we had 20,000 SAPS officers in this province. We now have 12,500 active SAPS officers in our
10 province. That is unacceptable. We need to make sure SAPS is resourced.

You know that the VIP Protection Unit that protects politicians in our country gets a budget of R4 billion every year. It is actually R4.2 billion if you look at the real numbers. R4.2 billion a year. But you know that the Anti-Gang Unit in the whole country gets an operational budget of R30 million. What we spent on fire fighting over the fire season, the whole Anti-Gang Unit, so there needs to be a serious rethink.

And I know that in the budget speech just tabled today in Parliament, I see
20 there is an extra billion put to Intelligence, and I absolutely welcome that. One billion. We need much more than that. But we stand here to help. We want to be part of it. The area that we really want to help in is investigations, because when SAPS do all the work that they do and they arrest someone, we get less than five percent conviction. Less than five percent. Our investigators are under-resourced, and I know this not because of Minister

Marais' policing needs and priorities. I know this from my own visits to police stations.

I was in the Kraaifontein police station the other day and had all the stats, but afterwards with our team and engaging with the investigators, the detectives, they have got 30 detectives in that police station. Of the 30 detectives, they have one computer, one email address, and that is in the Captain's office. If the Captain's not there, the office is locked and there is no email communication with any of those detectives. Those detectives do not, not one
10 of them, have an official cell phone. Not one.

How are you supposed to investigate? You know that if you are in the Financial Crimes Unit there, no one has a laptop, no one has a computer. Financial crimes need investigations, looking at bank statements, looking at spreadsheets, looking at financial transactions. They cannot do it. I had the same experience visiting the Khayelitsha police station. They have got more investigators. They at least have, of 90 investigators, five phones that they have got to share. They also have one computer that is very slow that they have got to deal with their emails.

20

Mitchell's Plain, a presidential designated police station to fight crime and gangsterism, does not have the resources that it needs. It does not have the management structure, the Captains and the Colonels, and it does not have the support to their investigations unit, and that is where we want to help. We will put investigators in place. We will put money in place. We will just do

investigations where the LEAP officers take firearms off the streets away from gangsters. Let us start there.

If it works, well, so be it, and we will expand it. If it does not work, hon Minister, shut it down. We have tried something. Another thing that we are busy with is following on the Global Initiative investment that took place in Grassy Park. In Grassy Park, the Global Initiative based out of Geneva that fight gangsterism across the planet, they looked at our system and they added a lawyer to the police station in Grassy Park. This lawyer then enabled the
10 police to get dockets that would stand up in court. Also another layer, not just the investigators, the original docket when the citizen comes to complain about a crime.

Initially, the police did not trust the lawyer. The citizens did not trust the lawyer, but the lawyer built trust over time, and now the police officers want the lawyer in the room because the docket is able to be handed over to the court system. The citizens trust the lawyer because they know that they are going to get a proper docket and there is a chance of a conviction. Now, we have taken this, and Minister Marais, along with the Mitchell's Plain Project,
20 is going to put two lawyers, through partnership with the Global Initiative, in the Mitchell's Plain police station, so we can start getting quality dockets delivered in that police station.

Let us start there, one bite at a time. One bite at a time, we will eat this elephant. And, hon Speaker, while our population continues to grow, the

number of SAPS officers continue to decline. This negligence is utterly nefarious, and as a Premier of this province, I find myself questioning how this situation exists every day. How can it be that those responsible for addressing crime and corruption do not tackle this problem with the proper budgets and the proper leadership? And perhaps there, I must also welcome the President's announcement that our SAPS officers that sit around the top table in management are now going to be subjected to lifestyle audits.

10 So, it is not just the Cabinet, it is also the top management in our police system. If you remember the Judge Tulare judgement that said that gangsters sit at the top table. Now, that was one of the first suggestions made to me, is let us have lifestyle audits. Let us see who is getting something in the back pocket, who has got a Ferrari in his wife's name, or whatever payment he is getting or she is getting through the gang system. And I really welcome that. We need it to happen decisively and quickly, because let us cut out the bad apples, because we have some really good policemen and women in our system.

20 Those need to be supported. We need to build trust for them and we need to enable the management to enable us to build safer societies. We are doing everything within our power and our mandate to address crime, both in terms of prevention and reduction. Many residents have critical information about gangsters and drug activity going on in their community, but have no safe way to share this information without compromising their safety. If we want to stop gangsterism and violent crime, then we need to create a safe way for

people to provide information that we are giving, that we are able to then give it to the investigators, to the police themselves, to the now extra support going to intelligence services.

And so to that end, I am glad to announce today a further partnership with the Global Initiative. This is the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, who already do excellent work in producing a document that we use extensively in the Western Cape called the Western Cape Gang Monitor. Those of you who are members of this Parliament, I am sure, know
10 this gang monitor well. So the announcement today is that we are going to be establishing now something called a Gang Observatory. This will be run by them, enabling anonymised spaces for citizens to give us detail of where that drug dealer is, where that gangster is, where those guns are.

And through that process, let us try it and let us see if we can help the intelligence system to actually utilise what everyone seems to know when you walk through the streets of these gang-infested areas. Everyone knows who is who, but are too scared to say anything because they know that they will be shot. Hon Speaker, over the last term, our Police Oversight and Community
20 Safety Minister, Minister Anroux Marais, has demonstrated that a new data-driven and technology-enabled model for policing can make real change in people's lives.

Where our 994 LEAP officers are deployed, we typically see decreases in murder and initiatives like ShotSpotter help us to target violent criminals and

have them arrested. We also have K9 units, and the K9 units are fully operational in Mossel Bay, Overstrand and Swartland. And there are plans, hon Minister, and thank you for that, to open one now or expand it now to Stellenbosch. These units support law enforcement agencies in combating drug trafficking, illegal firearms, and transport of stolen and illicit goods.

This past year, our Law Enforcement Support Programme, which focusses on rural safety, saw law enforcement and peace officers deployed to Laingsburg, Cederberg, Berg River, Hessequa, Oudtshoorn, Drakenstein, Stellenbosch, 10 Matzikama, and right here in George. This year, the programme will expand to a further seven municipalities. This, since 2022/23 financial year, saw 528 law enforcement and police support officers deployed to 24 municipalities across the province. Thank you.

Hon Speaker, our provincial safety personnel often work alongside neighbourhood watch groups, private security, community policing forums, and farm patrols. We owe a massive debt of gratitude to the thousands of men and women who form part of the community safety groups across our province. You are the eyes and ears while many of us are inside our homes or 20 at work. Thank you for your sacrifice, your courage, and your dedication. Tonight, Mr Rupert Pretorius is here. There he is.

Rupert is the coordinator of all 18 neighbourhood watches that fall in the George SAPS station area and has been involved with Neighbourhood Watch since 2013. During this year, he has been involved in solving several crimes

across numerous precincts. Thank you very much for your dedication, for your management, and for being that citizen amongst our citizens who give freely of their time to build a safer society. Thank you.

We have to prove to our youth that there are ways out of poverty that do not force you to surrender your life to drugs, violence, and gangs. Violence prevention, in safety terms, focusses on the proactive programmes that address the root cause of crime and early intervention to prevent harm before it occurs. It is about working with young people to give them optimism
10 beyond a life on the streets. And, hon Speaker, that is where one of our projects, the Chrysalis Academy, comes in. An academy that creates opportunity for and has created opportunity for thousands of young people in our province, and many coming from this region, the Garden Route region.

The Chrysalis Academy teaches young people discipline, how to cook, how to operate computers and computer sciences, about themselves, about their fitness, about welding. It does not matter whether you are male or female, you learn all of these skills, but most importantly, you learn how to be an upstanding citizen. You can see a Chrysalis student when they walk in the
20 room immediately. I really believe that this project, which has been going for many years, is an outstanding programme. I wish that we could expand this across our country.

But what I need to do, and I do not think that she is here, but I would like to pass on, and Minister perhaps you can do that, I want to pass on our gratitude

to the newly retired CEO, Dr Lucille Meyer. For years, she has ploughed her passion and her energy into that organisation and has made such a difference in so many people's lives. We owe her a huge debt of gratitude and we want to wish her all the very best in her retirement.

The PREMIER: Hon Speaker, we must also create hope and we must create it here in our province. Once again this is not an easy task. National employment figures are deeply concerning with many people losing hope of finding work. We refuse to let that happen here.

10

The Western Cape Government is pioneering Planet Youth, an internationally recognised prevention model that supports young people to reduce substance abuse or substance use, and avoid other high risk behaviours, strengthening protective factors in families, schools and communities.

This programme was first piloted in George in 2022, where Grade 8 and 9 learners from George, Uniondale and Haarlem were surveyed. Planet Youth aims to better understand youth; where they live, their experiences, what are the protective factors in their lives and what would support them in making
20 healthier choices. This is the most comprehensive study of its kind in South Africa and aims to inform programmes addressed at diverting young people away from crime. This is violence prevention.

Following the success of the pilot, Planet Youth has been scaled up across other parts of the province, led by hon Minister Wenger. Violence prevention

held together across multi departments by the Department of Health. You and your team, thank you, hon Minister.

To date 49 094 learners across 123 schools were surveyed in three districts: Cape Metro, Cape West Coast, or Weskus, and the Garden Route. That in actual fact has a knock-on effect rights down to 1,8 million residents, if you link that through to their families. This is a data source which we will be able to use in violence prevention into the future. It is not our own invention, we have borrowed this from other countries that have found success in this area
10 and we are building on their learnings, and I cannot wait to see how we are going to influence and change young people's lives because of this.

In the audience we have Amyoli Jansen and her mother, Noxolo Jansen. There we go. Amyoli [Applause.] – thank you very much – you are a Youth Ambassador leading from the front. This remarkable young person is a role model for our children, and we welcome you and your mother. Thank you very much for what you are doing in this programme. [Applause.]

Hon Speaker, in 2025 the Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness
20 launched Khulisa Car, another project. This project in isiXhosa says “to grow”. It is a pilot programme aimed at reducing malnutrition and stunting in early childhood. This is in partnership with the private sector, with the NGO sector and organisations – non-profit organisations and the academic institutions in our province, along with the department.

This is where we will provide in this pilot monthly nutrition in a voucher form or a card form, to undernourished pregnant women and mothers of low birth weight babies. This project is now in Breede Valley, Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain, and this is where, when we pick it up in our clinic, a mom will get a card, be able to get 10 highly nutritious products every month to make sure that she and her baby's weight can be picked up, because we know that an underweight or malnourished mother, or a stunted baby, they are more likely to drop out of school, earn less and remain trapped in a cycle of poverty and ill-health. When you drop out of school you are more than likely to end up in the gangs, you are more than likely to end up in criminal activity, and this programme, I think, is going to be a huge gamechanger going forward.

So I want to thank every single person involved in this pilot project, Khulisa, and it is interesting to see that the Vulindlela Team and the President spoke about it in his State of the Nation Address. I know it is still pilot format, but if we can get it rolled out across South Africa that will be a massive win for so many families who have really low birth weight babies.

In conclusion, when children being life with a strong foundation of nutrition, stimulation and care, they have a much better chance of succeeding at school and into adulthood.

So speaking of school and into adulthood, education is the key to independence, economic inclusion and employment. Under the leadership of

hon Minister David Maynier we are building schools faster than most other provinces combined. That is because we take this challenge very seriously, building more schools more innovatively and rapidly than ever before. Nine new schools have opened in the last year and two more busy being opened. All these schools are in high demand communities in Cape Town and along the Garden Route.

In readiness for the 2026 we have added another 175 new classrooms to our schools. The Western Cape Education Department will invest R1,5 billion in
10 new classrooms in this year ahead. 15 new schools are under construction now, and we will also build another 21 classrooms in existing schools through governing bodies.

We have just under 1 500 schools in our province and if we add the new schools and the Edu Invest Programme with private school, we have got to strive to build another 100 schools over the next few year.

The Western Cape Government is also providing meals, free meals, to 550 000 learners every single school day. A learner with a full stomach is more likely
20 to stay in school and go on to become a healthy, independent, working adult.

In 2021 a study showed us that 80% of South Africa's Grade 4 pupils cannot read for meaning, but the Western Cape Education Department is bucking this trend through innovation and agility.

The #BackOnTrack programme provides learners with additional academic support, but also a unique opportunity for learners from different schools to come together and learn in a new environment. Last year the programme was rolled out to 20 700 learners and offered training to over 2 400 teachers. I am delighted to say that the #BackOnTrack programme is working and will keep more children in school and out of a life of poverty.

In 2025 over 91 000 Grade 3 learners wrote independently administered annual systemic tests for mathematics and language. They achieved their
10 highest results ever. You have got to go in there and do these studies in the lower grades so that you can fix things, so that by the time we get to matric they have been sorted out.

Hon Speaker, since 2021 the mathematics pass rate has increased from 44,3% to 62%. The language pass rate has increased from 36,9% to 51,2%. A structured language programme has been operating in all primary schools since 2024. Teachers in Grades 1 to 3 were trained in the science of reading, and teacher and learner support materials were provided to all our schools, and we added an extra time for reading and mathematics within the current
20 school day for all learners Grades 1 to 3. We must add to that again at home; moms, grannies, let us also read to our kids. Let us help them develop a love of books.

Then, hon Speaker, our matrics did us proud once again. The class of 2025 delivered the Western Cape's best ever matric pass at 88,2% and best ever

bachelor's pass rate at 49,2%. [Applause.]

Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN) scored a matric pass rate of 91,9%, and the Jan Kriel School in Cape Town produced the top LSEN learner in the country, Takunda Muchuweni. Abigail Kok was recently named as the top matriculant in the country, and she is a matriculant from York High School right here in George, [Applause.] and Mr Francois Moll, the principal, is here I believe. Is he? Maybe not, but he is also here in that school right here in George, and I think that is a great symbol to show that we can actually
 10 put forward the best matrices in the country from any of our towns, but specifically really good that it is here in George this last year.

Our Education Department commits to excellence and works tirelessly to deliver excellence. Take Silikamva High School, which achieved a 100% pass rate for the first time in its history and a bachelor's pass rate of 76%. The principal, tonight she is here, Ms Nkala-Nkohla. Is she here? Maybe that is the other seat. It could be, but I want to say to her congratulations, thank you for your leadership, it shines through.

20 Then, hon Speaker, I must move on to gender-based violence. There has been a declaration of a national disaster with women and girls deeply impacted by this scourge, by this cancer in our country. We in this province are actively working to address this and we are supporting where necessary.

The Gender-Based Violence Ambassador Programme is being steadily

implemented across the Western Cape by Social Development Minister Jaco Londt and his department. These volunteers, 860 of them, are out there and have put up their hands, have volunteered, to help us tackle this scourge of GBV. Hon Minister Londt and his Department team plan to expand the ambassador programme this year and increase the number of capacity-building sessions for all of these ambassadors, and I have had the opportunity to meet so many of them, hon Minister, and these are people with passion, people that really want to deal with a blight on our society.

10 We also have 21 Gender-Based Violence Ambassador programmes that are currently operating across the province, including in the Karoo, Berg River, Cape Town, Cape Winelands, Overberg, Paarl, Stellenbosch, Breede Valley, Atlantis and right here in George, and tonight I would like to welcome Ms Linda Smit who is a GBV Ambassador and one of my guests.

Linda is a heroic survivor of gender-based violence [Applause.] and is determined to use her voice in raising awareness about the importance of education and prevention. Thank you, Linda. Thank you for your bravery and thank you for what you are doing to help us. We all have to do this together,
20 and I want to say, especially the men, we have to stand up and we have to make sure that we more than play our part in ending this scourge, but thank you.

Hon Speaker, the Western Cape Government employs approximately 1 000 social workers who work with thousands of our most vulnerable residents. We

also have 27 shelters for survivors of GBV. These safe houses are supportive environments allow survivors to rebuild and re-establish their independence. Late last year shelter services were accessed by 1 584 women and children. We have got to bring that number down.

To boost NGO resilience our department has launched the Cape Care Fund. They launched this in June last year. This they partnered with the Health Foundation, which for many years has raised lots of money and supported many of the NGOs in our region, and, hon Minister, thank you to you and
10 your department, especially in a time of economic hardship our NGOs battle to raise the money that they need, and I think this Cape Care Fund gives trust, builds trust, enables people to put money where their mouths are, and enables that money to be channelled to where it has the most effect.

So I am really looking forward to see how this is going to substantially beneficiate NGOs and NPOs across our province.

Hon Speaker, where social workers struggle to reach communities in remote parts of our province, this department took to the roads. This department has
20 mobile services and I see that you cover on average 60 000 kilometres a month, offering services in the most remote parts of our province, and we thank those social workers for doing that every single day.

Hon Speaker, our committed social workers provide essential support to vulnerable individuals, advocate for children's rights and protection, and help

families access vital services such as healthcare and social grants. They bridge gaps between communities and government systems. Their work not only offers immediate relief, but also promotes long term resilience, helping to build safer, healthier and more stable communities.

Over the next year DSD will pilot an independent living programme. This programme aims to help those young people that just turned 18 and have to leave our youth care centres. It helps them to address that critical gap and enables them to move on into life, and that programme I think is really, really
10 important, because we do not want those young people having 18 years of help and then be dropped and left, and actually probably end up back in one of our systems again. So I think this is really a welcome project.

Social Work Integrated Management System, that is too technical, we just call it SWIMS, is another app that, hon Minister, you have brought along, along with our IT Department, and this is an app that provides support to our social workers, using AI speech to text. It enables them to have clouds in the –
clouds. Files in the Cloud, it enables residents who need support, can move from one town to the other and their file can be pulled down by another social
20 worker. This is innovation and technology that changes the lives of our social workers, it takes the admin burden away from them, and what does that do? It gives them much more time with the most vulnerable in our society. This lives the value of caring in our government, and we thank each and every one of them, and we really welcome this app, and you are making it available not only to DSD, to Education, you are making it available to other government

officials, and I presume soon even to the NGO sector. [Applause.]

Hon Speaker, Cultural Affairs and Sports Minister, Ricardo Mackenzie, and his department have strengthened and expanded the MOD Programme, the Mass Participation, Opportunity and Access Development Growth Programme, and so more young people have access to safe, structured after school spaces guided by caring adults and positive role models. This is another one of those projects that keeps young people off the street, keeps them out of crime, gives them something to do in the afternoon.

10

This term we have grown the MOD Programme from 181 centres to 315 centres across the Western Cape. This is not growth for the sake of numbers, and we are moving forward with an ambitious clear platform to move this to 500 centres. Hon Minister, that is a clear promise into the future. It is in your – it is in your – I am sure it is in your performance contract.

500 centres, that no child would actually miss out on opportunities and no one will miss these opportunities because of their postcode or where they live, and so I think this programme really will be one of those violence prevention
20 programmes that helps us give opportunity to young people.

In 2025 alone the MOD Centres delivered through 55 centres here in the Garden Route, reaching 13 774 learners. This is an early intervention that is scaling, supporting learners and the foundations of lifelong learning and discipline, confidence and a sense of belonging is built.

Hon Speaker, The Western Cape is the only province to reverse unemployment amongst the youth between 2021 and 2024. I spoke about the 18% or 18,1% unemployment rate that comes from the last quarter labour force survey, and it was really nice to see that we are reducing the youth unemployment rate numbers, the only place in South Africa that that is happening, and it is because of these range of programmes that enables young people to get opportunities.

10 One of those programmes is called the YearBeyond Programme. Hon Minister, also with your department, hon Minister Mackenzie, and that is to provide opportunities for youth to gain work experience while serving their communities, and we are delighted to report that 3 250 youth were given such opportunities, and over 500 of them came from this region, the Garden Route.

Tonight we have two YearBeyond, or we call them YeBoneers, YearBeyond graduates in the audience. We have got Lisakhanya Pendu, who has been granted a bursary from her employer to study Environmental Sciences, bringing her one step closer to her 10 year dream of establishing an NGO that
 20 focuses on water resilience. Hon Minister Anton Bredell, I think you must keep an eye on her.

So, Lisakhanya – there we go. [Applause.] Thank you very much.

The PREMIER: ...[Applause.] and I am certain, well I can see from this

report, that this programme and this project has enabled you, and I think so many more just like you. Thank you very much, for playing your part. The YearBeyond helped her find her authentic and self-voice.

I also want to welcome Batya Cele, who was a teen mom who refused to give up. She is the manager of the YearBeyond Planet Youth Programme. So, she came through YearBeyond and now is involved in Planet Youth. So, Batya, thank you very much. ...[Applause.] These are the kind of programmes that are called creating opportunity for young people.

10

Hon Speaker, then in the Department of Health. At the tip of the Africa there is a place where R2,4 billion is being invested into new and improved health facilities across three years. Last year 45 health infrastructure projects were under construction, 30 of which will be completed this year. This massive push is set to improve access to healthcare for residents across the province.

These projects span the full health system, from clinic upgrades and hospital expansions and to specialised mental health facilities, strengthening access to care across the province. To the expansion of the Groote Schuur Hospital

20 Emergency Centre, R255 million is being invested. One of the busiest emergency centres in Africa, improving capacity, patient flow and safety for both patients and staff.

Three new acute psychiatric units will be added to existing regional hospitals this year including an additional adolescent ward at Lentegeur Hospital which

was completed last year. This will add 100 beds to the mental health system, which remains under immense pressure.

In 2025, 63 new mobile clinics hit the road replacing an ageing fleet that brings services directly into communities. Tonight, Elizabeth Braaf is in the audience. One of the nurses that helped design these incredible mobile clinics. Elizabeth? Is Elizabeth here? There she is! ...[Applause.] Thank you very much, Elizabeth. Wherever I go across the rural parts of this province, I come across these ambulances.

10

I always go and speak to the nurses in the ambulances, and I ask them what it is like taking these services to the far-reaching corners of this province. I also ask them: what are you called? What are these vehicles called? What I have picked up so far, is you are called The Angels. You come to bring care to people that are not able to make it or travel the long distances to the healthcare facilities in the far-reaching rural areas. So, we really do appreciate that service that you take to our people.

Hon Speaker, we continue with the redevelopment of Tygerberg Hospital.

20 This is the second largest hospital in Southern Africa. This is a once-in-a-generation undertaking that will change the very foundations of the public healthcare system in the Western Cape, and we must get it right. As the planning and behind the scenes work continues to make this a reality, the Western Cape Government is getting ready. Having invested R35 million alongside to two new industrial warehouses for linen and consumables at

Tygerberg and ensuring rapid and efficient material support to our hospital network.

This is what I call the health system Takealot because you really help to get support into the hospital. They do not have to have the storage spaces. They can get quick responses. This innovation did not come from management, this innovation came from the coalface workers in our department who said if we build this, we can actually get better service to our clients, the people who need healthcare. So, we really recognise those people and thank them for
10 their innovation.

In 2026, the Department will make significant progress with facilities in Hanover Park, Knysna and Mossel Bay. With nearly R500 million set aside for these projects, the facilities will take health services right to communities who need them most.

Artificial intelligence, hon Speaker, is transforming medicine worldwide, creating powerful opportunities to improve both the quality and accessibility of healthcare.

20

In previous Provincial Addresses, I spoke about our ability to have robotic surgery. The only robotic surgery in state hospitals in Africa are in two hospitals in this province, state hospitals in this province. Now, we have taken it to the next level. When I heard about it, I had to go and test it for myself because the Department reported their investment into AI-enabled

analytics for eye patients, especially diabetics. I am a diabetic, so I decided to go and test it.

These four clinics that are running these pilots are not in our main hospitals. They are in our clinics in Khayelitsha. They have AI-enabled AI tests to see if you have any damage to your retina, your retinopathy testing which is really critical for diabetes, and I was blown away. I was amazed at the system itself, at the speed and the analytics of the system.

- 10 In actual fact, I think there was a video made of it. It actually said I have got to go and look for something else in my right eye. There could be a bit of a pressure change. So, the AI system probably picked up something else that no one else would have seen. So now, I have got to go and have that tested further. This is how we take cutting-edge healthcare directly to citizens.

At Groote Schuur Hospital, in partnership with the University of Cape Town, the Department is introducing an AI-powered CT brain imaging system to support faster and more accurate stroke diagnostics and treatment. Strokes remain one of the leading causes of disability, and when it comes to

- 20 treatment, every minute counts.

This technology enables clinicians to analyse brain scans almost instantly, improving diagnostic speed and accuracy so that treatment can begin sooner. Earlier intervention significantly improves outcomes, helping to protect speech, movement, independence and lives. You know, these are the kinds of

projects. They might be landing in Cape Town, but this innovation, is especially powerful because it is linked through our tele-stroke platform which enables hospitals in Mitchells Plein, Somerset West, Victoria and even here in George, to connect through to the system using our data and broadband project. So, we are connected and enabled to use our doctors here in George, who can actually use these analytics and link through to doctors in other parts of the province or the world.

10 This technology does not replace doctors. It strengthens them by providing faster information, better decision support and access to remote specialist expertise where needed. This is how we care better for our citizens. This is how we live our values.

Hon Speaker, to this, I must move to Local Government. This year I cannot talk about the state of the province without mentioning the upcoming local government elections. Citizens have an opportunity to make their mark and improve their lives.

20 We have over 500 political parties in South Africa. When I look at the performance at all of our municipalities, there is a vast disparity in the quality of services delivered, and often these align to the makeup of the leadership.

You can be in one town where rubbish is collected, leaks are fixed, roads are maintained and the lights are on. You drive just 60 kilometres and you're in a

different town which resembles a war zone: rubbish everywhere, water leaks in every street, sewerage running down the road and into their water systems. In some cases, no water in taps for weeks on end.

Just down the road, Knysna is facing a water and management crisis. The Western Cape Government has offered support through many interventions and even funded some of the critical work with provincial funds.

We also tried to place the town under administration, but that was rejected by
10 National Government and the NCOP saying that we did not need to do that. Everything was under control. Well, the exactly the opposite is the case and things are only getting worse.

I would like to acknowledge hon Minister Baartman, hon Minister Bredell, you and your teams who are constantly trying to help that municipality. In actual fact, people think that hon Minister Bredell has a house there because he is there so often. [Interjections.] No, he not the real mayor.

Hon Speaker, there are municipalities where the wrong choices were made in
20 the last election and the costs have been great. Mistakes last for five years, and much damage can be done in that time. [Interjections.] It also takes far longer to fix what is broken.

So, my message today is please, cast your vote wisely this year.

[Interjections.] ...[Applause.] Maybe for your party too. But hon Speaker

...[Interjections.] but hon Speaker, while speaking about what really inspires me and municipalities, it is innovation. [Interjections.] And it is when service delivery is prioritised.

Hon Speaker, that makes me think of the Hessequa Municipality. The council took an incredible, incredibly brave and initiative decision and there was this successful bidder for a Solar PV plant and Battery project that we put out on bid. They received a total of R173 million over three financial years. Later this year, I will go along there and help flick the switch on this project, which
10 will essentially see the town of Riversdale become independent of Eskom.
Sorry, Mr Yedwa. I am sure you will still be connected.

They will have a whole brand-new energy model and this model, I think, will give sustainability to the town. It will make the town into a leading town when it comes to investment opportunities into the next energy programme or water programme for sustainable economic opportunities and sustainable service delivery. It will change the financial model for that town. I am pretty certain that once that switch has been flipped and we can see the evidence, it is the residents that are going to get cheaper electricity over time, sustainable
20 and cheaper electricity.

But it is not only in that municipality. The Breede River Municipality. We were there the other day for our Cabinet meeting. They have built three massive new reservoirs. You can see them when you drive along the N1. That is about water resilience and investment into the future.

Talking about water resilience, the City of Cape Town this year, is going out on two tenders. One for a desalination plant and one for a reuse plant. These are the two biggest water plants on the African continent this year, going out to tender. This is where major investments into pipelines, roadways. These carry services to citizens and enable investment and growth. Every one of our municipalities wherever they are, when they invest into these kinds of projects, that enables a change and longevity investment confidence, and a real difference to people who live there.

10

Hon Speaker, in conclusion. I am sure you are glad that I said that.

[Interjections.] Last year, I asked each of us to step up and that is exactly what this government did. And on that note, I want to say: hon DG, to you, your top management and to every single one of the 87 000 officials that work in this province day and night, whether they be nurses, whether they be teachers, whether they be administrators, whether they be on the end of a phone trying to help you, whatever service that they are giving, I want to, through you, thank every one of them for stepping up because these results do not just happen. You cannot get that reporting those numbers, just because.

20 It is because there is constant work every single day, stepping up to get it done. So, thank you.

I also want to thank my Cabinet. To your teams in your office, to my team in my office who also day and night make sure that we are able to deliver services to our citizens.

And then I want to thank Tracy and my family for giving me the opportunity to spend all this time with all of you, and not at home. Thank you. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve the people of this province.

...[Applause.]

Now it is time to build on that momentum. It is time to move forward like never before, to get things done.

- 10 At the tip of Africa there is a place where kindness is second nature. The people I meet and engage with, the warmth and generosity I see remind me of what makes this province of ours a remarkable place. Our kindness and get-it-done spirit are what sets us apart from the negativity we sadly see across the world.

We, the Western Cape Government and so many of our businesses and residents are taking action now to create our growth, our prosperity and our success. We are not called a place of hope for nothing.

- 20 Despite challenges and hardships, the people of the Western Cape still believe in our vision of success. They, with us, still dare to hope for a simple success of a dignified life that they can live to its fullest.

This is a province where bold ideas are nurtured and given expression through our enduring commitment to our residents. This is a region where trust has

been earned through hard work, where our values have meaning. Even as we have set a high standard, we must be determined to enable more of our residents to step up and out of poverty, and into a world of opportunity and hope.

At the tip of Africa there is a place where we innovate, where look out for our fellow residents, and where we grow together towards a brighter future.

At the tip of Africa there is a place that is growing jobs and opportunities. It
 10 is a place in which the beauty of the landscape is rivalled only by the hard work and resilience of its people.

It is a place where we will be spending 2026 getting to work and getting it done.

It is the Western Cape. Long may it prosper. Thank you. ...[Applause.]

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon Premier. Hon members, hon Petrus, is that a point of order?

20

†Mr B PETRUS (PA): Ja, hon Speaker. Ek weet nie of jy dit gaan. [Yes, Hon. Speaker. I do not know whether you are going to...]

The SPEAKER: What is your point of order, hon Petrus?

†Mr B PETRUS (PA): Of jy dit gaan aanvaar of jy dit nie gaan aanvaar as 'n punt van order nie. Maar as U dit aanvaar, kan ek dit op rekord plaas. Hier is iemand vir wie die oomblik te groot is hier binne, wat fotos vat en dit versprei en ek dink die agb Premier het daarvan gepraat in sy inleiding, wat fotos vat, onwaarhede versprei. Ons is besig hier met ernstige sake vir die mense van die Wes-Kaap. Ons het nie tyd vir Facebook spieëltjies nie en mense wat onwaarhede versprei. Ek wil aan die genes se bly ver van ons af, bly ver van my af. [Whether you are going to accept it or not accept it as a point of order. But if you do accept it, I would like to place it on record. There is someone

10 here for whom the moment is clearly too big, who is taking photos and spreading them around, and I think the Hon. Premier referred to this in his introduction — someone taking photos and spreading untruths. We are dealing here with serious matters for the people of the Western Cape. We do not have time for Facebook mirror antics and for people spreading untruths. I want to say to those individuals: stay far away from us, stay far away from me.]

†The SPEAKER: Baie dankie, agb Petrus. Net vir die record. Agb lede, dit is nie n punt van order nie. [Thank you very much, Hon. Petrus. Just for the record. Hon. members, this is not a point of order.] [Interjections.]

20

Hon members ...[Interjection.]

Mr B PETRUS (PA): So, so ...[Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: ...with ...[Interjection.]

Mr B PETRUS (PA): So lank dit op rekord is. [As long as it is on record]

The SPEAKER: Thank you, hon Petrus. I have ruled in that regard. Hon members, thank you very much to the hon Premier. In accordance with Rule 15 of the Standing Rules, the hon Premier's Opening Address will be placed on the Order Paper for debate.

Hon members and guests are requested to remain standing in their places
10 while the procession leaves the Chamber. Hon members, please note that on Thursday, 26 February 2026, the proceedings will commence at 8 Am.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite all the hon members and guests for dinner outside. Please use the doors on the left-hand side of the hall to exit and move to the dining area.

Hon members and guests, that concludes the business for the day and the House is adjourned.

20 The House adjourned at 20:31.