

# The state of health has gone backwards

By Lindy Wilson MP – DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Health

Through your Chair to the Minister, all we have heard is more empty rhetoric and your own backslapping about the few things you have got right. All we have been short of is the bells and whistles.

The state of health in South Africa has nothing to celebrate. Nothing. No one who relies on the public health system is celebrating. You know this, we know this.

This last week has highlighted just a few of the horrors patients of public health services have had to endure.

Elderly citizens tied to chairs, elderly citizens found with maggots in their mouths, and a pregnant woman in labour being turned away because “her womb was cleaning itself”. KwaZulu-Natal has an ongoing oncology crisis and in Limpopo, the time between diagnosis of cancer and oncology treatment is 12 months. This is yet another death sentence ... like those in the Life Esidemeni tragedy.

Provinces, who are allocated the bulk of the health budget, play a crucial role in the delivery of primary health care. But astonishingly the Primary Health budget has the smallest budget.

There is a chronic shortage of critical medicines, equipment, consumables and health professionals.

Despite this the provinces, like Gauteng for example, underspent their budgets for critical equipment by R504 million. This is mind-blowing!

The lawyers who represent the Gauteng Health Department in medico claims, have all withdrawn their services due to non-payment.

Provinces and the National Department now face R80 billion in Medical Legal Claims. R80 billion! This is not budgeted for - just recorded as a contingent liability. If just half of the claimants win their cases, provinces and the Department have to find R40 billion out of their budgets.

There goes your NHI, your infrastructure and building budget, your HR performance bonuses, and critical equipment budgets. Already departmental and provincial accruals in 2016/17 were R13.8 billion and the situation is not improving.

Simply put Minister, you are robbing Peter to pay Paul, and as always it catches up with you. You start in the red before day one of the next year. We all know that the billions spent on NHI have done little or nothing to prepare for a Universal Health Care System. In fact, in most instances, monies have been diverted from doctors, infrastructure and equipment to pay accounts. The state of health has gone backwards.

Yesterday, Cabinet approved the disastrous NHI and we are still to see concrete plans and budgets.

Minister, we always talk about best practice, so go where there is best practice in South Africa and not even you can deny it. The DA-governed Western Cape is the leading province in terms of Health Service Delivery.

I thank you.