

## **This health budget reads like a children's bedtime story. Lots of villains and a few heroes.**

By Lindy Wilson MP - DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Health

Let's start with the Pied Piper, namely President Ramaphosa. He whistled a tune for us. We believed him and agreed to follow him. He assured us, the hard lockdown period time would be used to improve the Health Sector to deal with the Covid pandemic.

Sadly, with time, our President started to whistle off key and his promises and assurances were not kept. We found that we were led down the garden path.

Instead of improving the established health sector, it was made worse in many instances. To improve the sector, it required taking what was already available, the casualties, the trauma units, the maternity wards and the ICU departments, and **adding on** to them to ensure sufficient capacity to deal with the surge of covid.

Most Provinces didn't get the message. Instead they cut back on facilities already available and used those facilities for the covid surge, putting the public a greater risk.

In this budget, the Department plays the "Fairy Godmother" and offers Provinces R21 billion to assist with the outbreak. The horse has already bolted Minister.

The AG was damning in his report and was clear that the Financial Management of the Provinces was disturbing, with no improvements made over the last several years. This has been apparent in the last months. The Provinces have until end of July to submit plans, which have to be approved, and only then can funding be made available and plans actioned. Really Minister....when the surge is already here and when they could not even make improvements in the first phase. Where did the money go?

When lockdown restrictions were eased, people allowed to commute and purchase alcohol, hospitals found themselves under pressure. No plans were put in place to improve capacity or more doctors and health workers employed to prepare for the ease in lockdowns. The plan failed. The President blamed the public and introduced more restrictions to cover up the Governments failure.

In the Eastern Cape, we found the 3 blind mice, including the Minister, who tried to convince us that motorbikes with a side car, were carriages fit for patients.

There was no magic wand to fix Eastern Cape Hospitals, where the conditions are abysmal. Doctors are collapsing, as they have become doctor, nurse, cleaner, porter and caterer. Just yesterday the EC Project team gave us a presentation on their readiness. They are not ready, in no way are they prepared. We were told to expect 9000 unavoidable deaths as a result. There were 400 yesterday. Sleeping Beauty is still fast asleep.

The new hospital at Bethal, Mpumalanga, has come to a standstill. With only 7 hours a day of electricity and the generator supplying the wards being broken down for weeks, there is inconsistent oxygen supply to wards to assist the ill. Meals cannot even be prepared.

In Limpopo, ambulances refused to go out to assist trauma patients because of no PPE. In Levubu the clinic has suspended all services because the generator has not been repaired for weeks. Doctors with 1 years experience have been employed as Clinical Heads.

In KZN vacancies are left open for critical positions like surgeons and senior dieticians, because applicants do not fulfil the BEEE criteria.

Gauteng is also in a crisis.

The hero in this instance are the Western Cape. Not only did they improve their facilities, they established proper and functional field hospitals and dealt with the pandemic before the surge arrived. And of course all South African Health Workers.

You cannot put the country at further risk, nor can we see another cent wasted Minister. We reject this budget.