

How does the Health Minister's conscience allow him to sleep?

By **Lindy Wilson MP** – DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Health

Thank you,

There is a proverb that says, *"There is no pillow as soft as a clear conscience."*

I wonder if any member of the Department of Health – from the Minister, his Deputy, their cadres and any other senior member – sleep comfortably at night. If you are, then certainly you do not have a conscience. And, given the state of Health in South Africa, I wonder.

There are millions of poor people out there without food, water or sanitation. They are jobless and without hope.

To compound their very sad plight, we add to their misery by being unable to assist them or their families when illness strikes.

The sad reality is that not only are they not assisted in our public health facilities, you drive away any hope that they may have had.

Let's take "Mary" at the Philadelphia hospital, who was left lying in labour for 4 hours because there was not a theatre available for an emergency caesarean. Eventually her uterus ruptured and her unborn child died. Not only did you steal her hope, you took away her baby too. How can you sleep at night?

The poor lady who died of septicemia at Steve Biko because there was no colonoscopy bags causing massive infections to her wounds. No one helped her. She died long before her time, leaving a stricken family, without hope. How can you sleep at night?

The gentleman lying in hospital with a gall stone obstruction, who had to wait until his GGT blood levels were 25 times higher than they should have been before surgery was booked for him. How can you sleep at night?

At the Livingston Hospitals, surgery came to a grinding halt when major medical suppliers refused to deliver to them because their accounts had not been paid. The only available water at the Letsitele Clinic is from a borehole riddled with E.coli and bacteria, because there is no budget to pay the municipality to open the taps at the clinic. How can you sleep at night?

It is little wonder that this Department is facing over a R100 billion in medico legal claims.

In the 2020/21 fiscal year, the Eastern Cape Department alone had to pay over R920 million in claims – no wonder their accounts are not paid.

The total paid out for 2018/19 claims was close to R2 billion. This money could have been used to build and improve on health to uplift the poor and vulnerable. Instead, it had to be used for the damages that this Department did to them. More than half of these were as a result of cerebral palsy and deliveries resulting in poor children being challenged for the rest of their lives.

The AG has warned about not compliance of procurement procedures and poor performance. So have the portfolio committee.

We have listened to your speeches today, and I close with another quote, *“People only get mad and defensive about certain topics when they know they’re guilty.”*

How do you sleep at night?