



EASTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE

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Attention: MEC Tandokazi Capa
Eastern Cape Department of Health

Dear MEC Capa

Re: Proposal to integrate Sarah Baartman EMS call centre at Gqeberha EMS call centre

The Eastern Cape Department of Health (ECDoH) has presented a "Concept Document" to stakeholders in the Sarah Baartman district, which, if implemented, would see the Sarah Baartman Emergency Medical Services (EMS) integrated into the Gqeberha Call Centre.

The objectives for the proposal are as follows:

- To improve service coordination and response time across the Sarah Baartman district
- To leverage digital technologies to enhance services
- To centralise call-taking and dispatching to ensure uniform standards of care
- To support the department's mandate under 4IR to digitise healthcare and improve emergency services.

In order to achieve this, they plan to transfer twenty selected EMS communications staff from Sarah Baartman district to Gqeberha.

This concept document is riddled with flaws and false assumptions.

Firstly, in order to improve service delivery, one needs to train and manage staff effectively. The centralised eKomanzi Call Centre is a case in point. It has, and continues to be, an unmitigated disaster. Despite having digital technology and all the bells and whistles, the call takers and dispatchers are poorly trained, poorly managed and mostly incompetent.

Secondly, despite the Premier rolling out Broadband across the province since the beginning of the sixth administration, most rural areas, including rural hospitals, do not even have Internet! It is therefore completely unrealistic to assume that digital technologies are going to improve services when communities in rural areas such as Sarah Baartman do not have access to digital platforms.

Thirdly, the Health Portfolio Committee has long advocated for decentralisation of healthcare services back to districts and sub- districts, where communities can access them more easily. The department itself speaks continuously about the Hub and Spoke model to optimise service delivery at district level, and national government has developed the District Development Model to enhance services at district level. This concept document is in direct conflict with both.

Lastly, it seems the department has learnt nothing from the shambolic transfer of staff away from the Orsmond TB Hospital in Kariega, which has been a Human Resources disaster and has cost the department over R130 million in salaries for people who are essentially sitting at home and doing nothing. How does the department assume that uprooting twenty people from their communities and disrupting twenty families is going to end?

I therefore urgently appeal to you to withdraw this proposal immediately. I also humbly request an in-person meeting with yourself on Monday morning to discuss this matter.

The foundational concept of digital technology is that it has the ability to connect people and systems wherever they are in the world. It is the perfect counter to centralisation. Health service failures across the province are a result of poor training, poor management and the employment of cadres who are simply not fit for purpose.

I do not believe that this concept document is realistic or implementable. It would be far more beneficial to our citizens to train and manage health department employees more effectively so that they can deliver better services wherever they are.

Kind regards,

Hon Jane Cowley

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Cowley', with a stylized flourish at the end.
