

MEDIA RELEASE:  
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## **KZN Health MEC endorses special pastoral visits to hospitals**

KWAZULU-NATAL Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, has endorsed a request by a group of Durban pastors to be granted permission to visit hospitals and offer spiritual support to members of their congregations who are in hospital - outside of normal visiting hours.

At a meeting in Umlazi yesterday, (27 September 2015), the pastors handed a letter to the MEC requesting access to hospitals to render pastoral care to those admitted. This took place at the beginning of a week when the Hospice Palliative Care Association is holding its annual conference in Durban, in partnership with the KZN Department of Health, under the theme, "Hidden lives, hidden patients, compassion and care for all."

In their letter, signed by Pastor T Mthethwa of Oasis Church in Umlazi, the pastors state: "Pastors play a vital role in spiritual issues, especially for those who are sick in hospitals. In response, the MEC said: "I cannot agree with the pastors more. My training in Palliative Care confirms that we work as a team. Health care professionals cannot offer complete psycho-social intervention to patients. But spiritual leaders play that role with distinction."

The MEC said he would forward the pastors' request to his KZN Health Head of Department, Dr Sifiso Mtshali, for his consideration.

"There are patients who believe that the last holy communion given by their pastors is critical for their journey ahead of them, either in this world or beyond. And since some people come to our facilities and move on to the new world, it would be important that our HOD gives directives to CEOs of hospitals how to assist in this process," said the MEC.

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