

MEDIA RELEASE:
11 August 2016

KZN Health MEC Sibongiseni Dhlomo hails Transnet's and Eskom's "miracle" mobile healthcare services, which promote access to primary healthcare

KWAZULU-Natal Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has applauded Transnet and Eskom for collaborating on an exciting initiative that will strengthen and enhance Government's efforts to improve access to primary healthcare services for the people.

MEC Dhlomo says that Eskom's new state-of-the-art Bophelong mobile health clinic, which was launched at the Ladysmith railway station today, will help some of the most vulnerable members of society to live longer and healthier lives.

Eskom's four Bophelong mobile health clinics (buses) will complement the services already provided by Transnet's Phelophepha (meaning "good, clean health") healthcare train and the mobile health care services provided by the KZN Department of Health. Phelophepha is also known as the "Miracle train."

Between themselves, these mobile healthcare facilities provide dental and eye care services, immunisations, general health check-ups for school children and the most vulnerable members of society.

Both mobile initiatives will collaborate on certain routes and stations. In those instances, when the Phelophepha train is parked at a particular station, the Bophelong Mobile Clinic will then visit schools in the surrounding areas to provide healthcare to school children.

In cases where the staff of the Bophelong buses diagnose a patient as being critical, the patient will be referred to the local clinic or hospital for urgent medical attention.

Addressing a large crowd that had gathered inside a tent on the premises of the Ladysmith railway station, MEC Dhlomo said both the Bophelong and Phelophepha mobile health services will boost Government's efforts to promote a preventative - as opposed to a curative and hospital-centric - approach to healthcare.

MEC Dhlomo said: "We welcome this joint initiative because it is taking healthcare services to the people. But it will only work if people use it. We always encourage the public to get into the habit of getting a health screening at least once a year. Diseases are easier and cheaper to treat and manage if detected early. Do not wait until you are sick, because by that time, diseases have set already set in. When we find that you are suffering from four or five different ailments, it becomes difficult."

Deputy Minister of Public Enterprises Bulelani Magwanishe said the mobile health facilities would improve access to primary healthcare and help ensure that no child drops out of school because they cannot see or hear the educator in the classroom.

“The provision of healthcare services should be anchored in partnerships between government, state-owned companies and key stakeholders to ensure that we provide meaningful and impactful healthcare services to the majority of South Africans. We applaud Eskom and Transnet for playing this developmental role in society as the provision of primary healthcare is one of the key priorities of government, particularly with regards to services to people in semi-urban and rural areas.

“Therefore, we’re saying the women who marched for welfare, against pass laws, today, that march is back. It has been returned by the government. It is a march for service delivery. We are here to bring health services to our communities. We are giving young people glasses free of charge, among other things. These are not glasses to see boyfriends and girlfriends. They are glasses to help them see endless opportunities. We have brought the most important gift... the gift of life, the gift of health,” he said.



KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, Deputy Minister of Public Enterprises Bulelani Magwanishe and Deputy Minister of Communications Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams, inspecting a scanner at the launch of Eskom’s and Transnet’s mobile health services in Ladysmith.

ENDS

Issued by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health