

**ADDRESS BY THE MEC AT THE OCCASION OF THE DEPARTMENTAL 2008  
STRATEGIC WORKSHOP HELD AT SAN LAMEER ON THE 16 - 18 JANUARY  
2008**

I am pleased that we meet again at the beginning of the year, energized, ready and prepared to reflect and work on the health challenges faced by our people.

I have decided to call the past year as the “Year of Great Storms”. This is because of the following reasons. Firstly, whilst all other provinces experienced one huge general strike, we had two. We were also bombarded by the suspension of the Head of Department by the Premier pending an investigation and possible disciplinary measures being taken. We were also bombarded by negative media reports on the Department emanating from within the department.

Despite all these I believe I will be representing many in the Department and outside to say that I am satisfied with the impact we made around the theme on women and children. I am also satisfied that we made strides in implementing our programmes on the ground.

The year being a Conference year for the ruling part, it also offered an opportunity for us to listen to the people on what they think about our service delivery. The people spoke, and unequivocally so!

The people are concerned with the following;

- Private Sector Greed: and they would like the state to curb escalating health costs and prices
- They say there is a dialectical relationship between progress and stagnation. While there is progress, there are serious problems.
- The quality of care, infrastructure development, maintenance of infrastructure and management capacity is a challenge in the health sector.
- They are worried that we are not moving in implementing the national health Insurance System.
- They want us to develop a single Health Information System.
- They want to know why there is stagnation in acceleration of the hospital revitalization programme as part of the Extended Public works Programme?
- They want us to give particular attention to the prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases.

In short, these are some of the broad challenges that we need to address in this year.

I must inform you that just on January 11 our National Minister Dr Manto Tshabalala Msimang and all the Health MEC's met with the CEO's of the Private Hospital Groups represented by:

- Life Healthcare
- Medi Clinic
- Netcare
- NHN National Hospital Network
- Hospital Association of South Africa (HASA)

The purpose here was to discuss concerns around the excessive increases in private hospital tariffs for 2008 - well above the general inflation rate.

We do regard these competitors as our partners in the delivery of the provincial health care and as such we wanted to give them an opportunity to explain why the increases were necessary and, to the extent possible, ascertain how they arrived at the exorbitant increases.

Our government engages in these initiatives because it recognizes that poverty and joblessness are the primary and greatest burden faced by our people. All our programmes as government converge around these pillars:

- Improving living conditions through access to health care; access to basic physical and social services as well as education for all communities
- Establishing a social security system through social grants, foster care grants and pensions to protect and provide for the poor, the disabled, and the elderly and other vulnerable groups like women and children, as well as;
- Creating opportunities for our people to sustain themselves through productive activity hence our Targeted Enterprise Development Unit.

As the Political Head of this Department, I am expected to ensure that all the above, and more, happens. We take our cue from the African National Congress which is the governing and ruling party of our country and province and of which I am a proud member and a leader.

Clear mandates are given particularly by the January 8 Statement as well as the State of the Nation Address in February when parliament opens.

Of essence to us as the Department is that the NEC's January 8 Statement categorically states that, *'education and health must be prioritized as the core elements of transformation'*.

It further states that:

*'We must acknowledge that much is wrong in our public health care system. Though progress has been made, the country is still faced with significant challenges with respect to the quality of care provided; the physical infrastructure, maintenance and management of public health facilities; the working conditions and remuneration of doctors, nurses and other health care workers; and the equitable distribution of health care resources.'*

My dear manager, comrades and colleagues, the above statement calls for agents of accelerated transformation to lead the public service. It requires managers who have a new commitment. Managers with a clear understanding of the challenges that our people face and who understand the programme to address these as outlined by the party in government. We require managers who are loyal. We also need, and urgently so, a public service that is informed, participates in policy advocacy, cares for the people and is committed to the transformation agenda.

We called upon to advance and deepen the transformation agenda in order to change the health status of the poor. We have been asked to move swiftly in implementing the National Health Insurance Plan so that we do away with the persisting in the provision of health care.

Large sums of public monies have been spent in improving the health infrastructure in the province. We have to evaluate the impact of the many programmes we have on the ground so that we can have a clear of whether we are on the right track or not. We also need to ask ourselves serious and painful questions around the formulae we use in distributing resources. Why does eThekweni always receive a bigger slice of the cake? Could this be as a result of management incapacity?

The people have also called upon us to seriously address the main health problems. We are called upon to intensify efforts on behaviour change. The Minister has announced that she would like to us to rally the country on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February to start a scaled up campaign around healthy lifestyles. The messages need to include the reckless behaviour that we witness over the festive seasons. I was shocked to receive statistics on trauma cases between 1 December and 27 December 2007 in this province.

These revealed that King Edward Hospital attended to **88 assault** cases, **74 gunshot** victims (including a family killing in Inanda where a six month old child was also shot at), **150 stab** victims, **22** cases of **domestic violence** and **433** motor vehicle accident (**MVA**) cases.

At Addington we were informed that there had been **2895** trauma patients since the 1<sup>st</sup> December and these include **606 assault** cases, **28 gun shot** victims,

**312 stab** victims, **75 rape** survivors (**20** of these being **children**), **48 drunk drivers** and **442 MVA** cases.

We must pride ourselves with the work we have done in the roll-out of ARVs. However, we must also admit that there are still problems and bottlenecks that we must address. In the same vain we also need to improve our Maternal Child and Women's Health Programmes in order to ensure that we, as stated in our Budget Speech, secure a healthy future.

I must say that I am worried with the Performance Management System and the levels of productivity. For us to realize the goal of a better life for all needs us to improve our productivity levels. But for this to be successful, we must have a good and working Performance management System in place.

I have recently developed a view that some Hospital managers regard their work as a deserved promotion. In some institutions, people sit with problems for many years and when you ask, you are told; *"Nami ngayifica lapha lenkinga!"*

District Managers, are you assessing these people? If so, how?

My view is that this Strategic Workshop, for it to be productive, meaningful and relevant to our Mission and Vision; needs a new focus, dedication, commitment and energy, a sense of mutual accountability and an unwavering passion for our

women and children and elders. Let us not fail our people this year. In the ending financial year, we have greatly focused on improving services for women and children. We handed out a large fleet of mobile clinics and emergency vehicles in order to scale up our endeavours in serving the rural poor and improving our response to emergency calls.

This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Alma Ata Declaration (adopted on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 1978 in the former USSR) which ushered in the primary health care approach, the cornerstone of our health care delivery. As the January 8 Statement asserts; *“the achievement of a better health for all is an important part of improving the quality of life of poor South Africans”*, I therefore challenge this workshop to find ways of strengthening our primary health care delivery so that we can make head way in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

I wonder if those of you familiar, and have studied this Declaration, have noted its congruence with our glorious Freedom Charter. The declaration asserts health as a human right for all which is a premise of the Freedom Charter. Secondly, it promotes equity between the haves and the have not. I therefore believe that we need to provide space and resources for a sincere and objective reflection on progress made in providing health care for all so that we can factually respond to the challenge of achieving a better health for all as a basis for improving the quality of life of the poor and marginalized.



In conclusion, I wish to re-emphasize that we need your loyalty to the needs of the people. You are the agents for building a better life for all.

I feel I need to explain that when we talk about a People's Contract, we are including the public servants!

I hope you will have fruitful deliberations.

I thank you!