

## **DA in Western Cape 'unequivocally reject' NHI Bill – IOL 13**

September 2019

"The system will then be driven down to the lowest common denominator - less medicine and equipment, fewer doctors and nurses, and broken buildings," writes Naushad Omar. Picture: Tracey Adams/African News Agency(ANA)  
Cape Town - Since the publishing of the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill in August there has been confusion about the difference between it and Universal Health Coverage (UHC), with many people making the mistake of considering both terms to mean the same thing.

Dr Beth Engelbrecht, the head of Health in the provincial government, on Wednesday spent a couple of hours explaining the difference to the legislature's standing committee on health in a bid to help the committee with crafting its comments on, and contributions to, the bill.

Engelbrecht said: "The NHI is a funding instrument in the same way as an insurance policy or a medical fund.

"You pay money into the fund and the fund buys medical care."

She told the legislators that while the goal of the NHI was to achieve Universal Health Coverage, the province had some concerns about the issues of accountability and the role of the provinces under the bill.

"The NHI fund centralises the financing, decision-making and governance of the fund.

"It does the same with access to services and payment of the providers to a national level, and this duplicates the role of provinces and the provincial treasury," said Engelbrecht.

She said that the UHC could be broken down into three simple components which were "access to healthcare, quality of health care and affordability of healthcare".

"As the bill stands, it will result in health facilities operating as independent entities rather than as part of an integrated health system as it would under the UHC system," said Engelbrecht.

The Democratic Alliance in the Western Cape also weighed in saying that they unequivocally reject the NHI Bill in its entirety and calls on the public to do the same. The provision of public healthcare in the Western Cape "is the best in the country and has proven that universal public healthcare is indeed possible".

MPL Wendy Philander said: "We call on all residents of the Western Cape to reject this disastrous piece of draft legislation as it will cause the complete collapse of healthcare provision in the country. Residents can lodge their objections at [www.stopthenhi.co.za](http://www.stopthenhi.co.za) and familiarise themselves with its implication for quality healthcare provision".

The Democratic Alliance in the Western Cape said they will fight this Bill tooth and nail to ensure that this does not become another failed, or even deadly, state-owned enterprise.

[@MwangiGithahu](#)

[mwangi.githahu@inl.co.za](mailto:mwangi.githahu@inl.co.za)