

Respected health director-general resigns – Business Day 1 November 2019

CLAUDI MAILOVICH

Malebona Precious Matsoso, director-general of health. Picture: FINANCIAL MAIL
Health director-general Malebona Precious Matsoso has resigned almost a decade after she took up the reins as the department's accounting officer.

The department said in a statement on Friday morning that Matsoso left the department effective November 1 after she and health minister Zweli Mkhize came to a mutual agreement.

The department said she asked to leave the department early to pursue her PhD studies. Her contract would have ended in May 2020.

She joined the department in May 2010 as director-general and worked mostly with former health minister Aaron Motsoaledi as the department's political principal. Mkhize was appointed as health minister in President Cyril Ramaphosa's cabinet in late May 2019.

She worked for the department before her appointment as director-general and was also director of public health innovation and intellectual property from 2004 to 2010 at the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The department's main challenge is to roll out the National Health Insurance (NHI), for which a bill was finally approved by the cabinet in July 2019.

In November 2018, in a hard-hitting interview with Business Day, Matsoso said she had been completely sidelined by presidential adviser Olive Shisana and Motsoaledi in revising the controversial draft NHI Bill. The draft bill proposed far-reaching reforms to SA's health system to achieve the government's ambition of providing universal health coverage.

The department said on Friday that Matsoso had worked tirelessly to lead a team that sought to achieve a vision of "a long and healthy life for all South Africans", which could be seen from increased life expectancy rates.

"Under her leadership, the government has put in place pro-poor health policies which ensure free healthcare at the primary healthcare facilities and hospitals for the indigent. This meant that all financial barriers to utilise healthcare services were removed," the department said.

According to the statement, she thanked her executive management team and the staff of the national health department for the support they have given her during her tenure.

"I salute all the health workers and urge them to be unwavering in implementing the universal health coverage through NHI," she said on Thursday evening.

Mkhize expressed his gratitude and wished her well in her future career.

mailovich@businesslive.co.za