

Actuaries slam SA Covid-19 data; NHI back on CR's desk; Steinhoff; Amazon – Biz News 6 July 2020

By Jackie Cameron

- Actuaries have slammed Covid-19 forecasts for South Africa, warning that they are overly pessimistic and that the damage to the economy is out of kilter with strict Covid-19 containment measures. PANDA, a thinktank of actuaries, economists and other number crunchers devoted to understanding Covid-19, has ripped Western Cape Covid-19 data analysis to shreds. The group says modelling by provincial health officials is catastrophically wrong and bad science. The PANDA article is on BizNews.com as is an article by retired actuary Dave de Klerk, whose number-crunching suggests it doesn't look at all likely to me, that we will even approach 10,000. As of Monday, the number of people who have tested positive for Covid-19 reached 197,000 while the number of deaths hit 3,200.
- President Cyril Ramaphosa has indicated that the National Health Insurance plan for South Africa is back in the government's sights. In his weekly newsletter to the nation, he noted that, according to new research published by the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, a third of patients admitted to hospital with Covid-19 had at least one comorbidity. This is a significant concern in a country such as ours that also has high prevalence of HIV and tuberculosis, the leading cause of natural deaths in South Africa last year. Among the many cases being made for the is that we will be able to mobilise the necessary resources to overcome the burden of these non-communicable diseases and improve the health outcomes of all our people, not just those who can afford to pay.
- Steinhoff International rose the most in almost three months after the retailer confirmed it's working on ways to settle R192bn of legal claims following an accounting scandal that almost destroyed the company. The stock climbed as much as 26% in Frankfurt on Monday, its biggest increase since mid-April, says Bloomberg.
- Amazon.com rallied on Monday, with the stock extending a recent advance deeper into record territory and topping \$3,000 for the first time, reports Bloomberg. Shares rose as much as 4.8% to touch \$3,030.30, and were on track for their fourth straight daily gain. The stock is up more than 12% over the four-day stretch and has climbed about 80% off a March low, resulting in a market capitalization of \$1.5trn. Amazon has seen accelerating demand for its e-commerce and cloud-computing services during the pandemic, which has closed brick-and-mortar rivals and led more people work remotely. Many analysts on Wall Street expect these trends will outlast the pandemic, solidifying the company's market share and fueling the recent advance.