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### ***NHI will cause massive labour disruption***

“Massive restructurings, like the NHI, often induce labour turbulence. Transferring health functions from provinces to a national level implies significant restructuring with potential job losses. The fate of numerous administrative staff currently at the provincial level is still to be determined. The NHI might absorb some, but past experiences suggest many may be left with uncertain futures,” wrote Claire Botha in *Daily Maverick* (26 July 2023).

### ***Hope for softening of NHI bill provisions***

“Organised business is optimistic that Parliament will amend the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill’s provisions on the future role of medical schemes and soften the proposal to restrict them to offering cover for services not provided by NHI,” reported ***Business Day*** (16 Nov 2023). At a joint briefing with Business Unity SA (Busa), the chair of Business for SA (B4SA), Martin Kingston, said certain adjustments are to be made by government, allowing medical schemes to offer only complementary cover for services not reimbursed by the NHI fund.

\*The Health Department has estimated the NHI fund will cost R480bn to R520bn a year and require raising additional tax revenue of R200bn. This will mean raising VAT to 21%, increasing personal tax by a third, or raising corporate tax by 60%.

B4SA NHI project lead, Roseanne Harris, warned that “massive risks” are associated with a single fund dependent on public funds. Harris said even if the government managed to raise R480bn for the NHI fund, this would cover only basic healthcare.

### **Also read**

#### **Low-cost medical options will help sustain NHI – Medical Brief (15 Nov 2023)**

### ***SA’s healthcare system ‘a complete shambles’***

“The elephant in the room,” that is how Dr Darryl Smith, a cardiologist at Linksfield Clinic, described the NHI Bill at a recent SA Heart Congress, reported ***Financial Mail*** (16 November 2023). Smith emphasised the lack of tangible outcomes, despite significant investments in hospitals like Chris Hanani Baragwanath and Charlotte Maxeke, raising doubts about financial trust and the government’s capability and proficiency.

“In response to these concerns, Dr Nicholas Crisp, Deputy Director-General in the National Department of Health and a key figure overseeing the NHI, urged an end to the prevailing distrust. **“He characterised SA’s health system as a ‘complete shambles’ and highlighted the disintegration of public and private healthcare, stressing the necessity for collaboration to address the existing challenges.**”

“According to Crisp, the NHI aims to eliminate provincial autonomy, centralising control and budget allocation across various entities, including provinces, municipalities, the military, and both public and private healthcare sectors. Crisp acknowledged the need for a gradual and careful transition to ensure continued funding for patient care without discrimination.

Meanwhile, the private sector plans to launch a purchasing forum in January to centralise the acquisition of drugs and medical equipment for specific health conditions.