

## **Risk of health collapse in NCape grows – PoliticsWeb 3 September 2019**

Today's decision by frustrated nurses, at the Dr Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe Hospital in Kimberley, to bring services to a standstill, is a clear sign that the risk of a total collapse of provincial health services is growing.

The nurses have valid concerns. They are overworked and constantly exposed to litigation due to the conditions that they are forced to work under. Some of them have not even received overtime or night stipends that are due to them, for extended periods of time. This is wrong.

Health MEC Mase Manopole urgently has to address these challenges or otherwise prepare for the complete breakdown of state health care. She has to hurry because time is running out. We acknowledge that the MEC has called on retired nurses to again join the state health sector, but we are not seeing results. Appointments are simply not being made at RMS Hospital and across the province, despite there already being a shortage of 1 556 professionals nurses in the Northern Cape.

The Democratic Alliance (DA) is deeply worried about the severe shortage of doctors and nurses in the Northern Cape and this is not the first time we have voiced our concerns. Our sick and most vulnerable people are ultimately being denied basic health care or being exposed to adverse events, due to a dire lack of capacity at hospitals and clinics across the province.

Kimberley Hospital has for a long time already been implementing theatre cuts as a result of a shortage of nursing staff at the facility. This in turn causes patient backlogs to pile up even more, subsequently also delaying medical care for seriously ill patients.

What especially frustrates the DA is that a number of nurses and doctors, who are actually keen to work in the Northern Cape, apply for positions for but their appointments never seem to be processed.

If the department can't even process appointments, how can it possibly provide adequate health care?

The department should urgently review its human resource allocations to avoid losing professional health workers. It must also get its finances in order and pay nurses what is owed to them. This is non-negotiable.

Rolling out NHI in the Northern Cape, when the public health system is in such a shambolic state, will not improve access to healthcare, but will add more bureaucracy and deterioration in the quality of health services provided.

That is why the DA has proposed an alternative to NHI, the Sizani Universal Healthcare system, which calls for investment and improvement of the public health system so that people are at the center of any reform.

*Issued by Andrew Louw, DA Northern Cape Provincial Leader, 3 September 2019*