

Thank you once again for gracing this media briefing with your presence.

This provides us with an invaluable opportunity to keep the people of KZN and South Africa abreast of the latest developments regarding the Covid-19 pandemic.\

As you are all aware this Covid-19 has changed life as we know it and is affecting every sector of society. The provincial executive met this morning and received reports from various departments on various matters pertaining to our response to Covid-19.

These are:

Academic Recovery Plan

The Executive Council received a report from the Department of Education on the various options to be explored to mitigate against the impact COVID-19 has inflicted on the education sector.

This presentation is part of the proactive approach by the department as we still await further announcements in relation to the lockdown. We are aware that a lot of scientific and medical assessment is being done by national government and we will hear from the President in due course regarding the national lock down situation.

The proactive plan from the MEC for Education in KZN explores options in the event of the lifting of the lock down period or a possible extension of a lockdown period. The plan explores a possibility of adopting a potential boarding school approach for those learners and teachers doing grade 12 and various programmes for grades below. We must emphasize that it is a holistic proposal with all risks analyzed and mitigated. Currently the department is conducting a recovery process via mass media and other platforms.

The detailed plan which involves entails all the precautions in the event of a possible extended lock down has been in principle endorsed by the Provincial Executive Council. The department has been asked to discuss it with National Government, stakeholders, such as parents, organized labour, parent organisations. We must emphasise that this is a scenario planning subject to the buy –inn of national government and stakeholders.

It should be remembered that KwaZulu-Natal has the largest number of learners compared to other provinces.

In the meantime we are ramping up the existing Education Programmes on various media platforms.

Investigation into alleged irregularities in the purchase of blankets by DSD

The Executive Council was informed about the media reports on the Department of Social Development procurement of blankets for use at homeless shelters during this current phase of the lockdown. The Provincial Executive Council has resolved that the Provincial Treasury be mandated to institute an investigation into the matter.

Developments at St Augustine's Hospital

MEC'S REPORT: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AT ST AUGUSTINE'S HOSPITAL

As announced by Health Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize yesterday, 66 people have tested positive at St. Augustine's Hospital in Durban, of whom 48 are staff members, and the rest are patients. This is an extremely concerning development and through our health institutions we have asked for a detailed examination of how cases were being managed at the hospital. At this point in time we are responding to the developing crisis and we are not as yet sitting in judgement.

Out of 1,982 staff at Netcare St Augustine's and out of these, (735 or 37% are permanent employees), we have established that:

- At least 112 staff members have been tested at the hospital. This includes nurses, cleaners, and administrative personnel.
- There are currently 74 patients still in the facility.
- As of last week, St Augustine's Hospital has stopped taking in new patients, as per directive that we issued to them. Patients are being discharged or moved to facilities.
- All those in the facility are currently being tested in preparation for next moves regarding this hospital which will come from either the Minister or MEC for Health.

Management of Netcare is currently undertaking a symptomatic checklist of all staff to assist with appropriate screening.
From the pilot of the home screening and testing programme held in Umlazi on Saturday, a total of 118 households, were visited, 502 people screened, and tested 17 people.

PPE stocks and related labour matters

We have also noted ongoing disgruntlement over the unavailability of the Protective Personal Equipment. Complaints have come through from both our healthcare workers and from organised labour.

We want to clarify that due to the high demand from all countries affected by COVID – 19, there is a global shortage of PPE, particularly the N-95 masks that are only manufactured in China.

That said, we want to assure both our healthcare professionals and organised labour that we are doing our best - including engaging with the private sector - to secure enough supplies. We are the first to acknowledge our responsibility to protect healthcare workers from getting infected with COVID – 19.

And, in that regard we will continue to do everything in our power to ensure that all those who require these masks get them.

KZN Provincial Executive Council today resolved to extend ongoing interventions in the province's municipalities, including the interventions that were scheduled to end on 30 March. Having received a comprehensive report on the state of municipalities under intervention, the Provincial Cabinet has decided to extend intervention in Richmond, uMzinyathi, Mtubatuba, Msunduzi, Inkosi Langalibalele, Mpofana and Abaqulusi local municipalities and at uThukela district municipality.

The Provincial Executive Council believes that the extended municipal interventions will allow for consequence management measures, such as the implementation of forensic reports and the conclusion of ongoing investigations, to unfold beyond the current Covid-19 lockdown. The intention is to ensure full accountability and for standard procedures to proceed under normal circumstances unaffected by the lockdown.

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