

OPINION: 'NHI is going nowhere slowly'

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DEAR Editor,-

Minister Mosoaledi's assertion that "Free higher education for all... Nobody says anything about health care systems when they are two sides of the same coin because one can't work without the other I can assure you" is only valid because of the tussle for funds from the national fiscus for both.

In KZN the DA is acutely aware – and has said on various occasions – that Zuma's ANC's intended National Health Insurance (NHI) will amount to very little without serious consideration of the funding module.

Amongst government's suggestions, in order to come up with the money, is the disastrous notion of raising taxes. If this is done and additional funds become available to the nation then the DA must ask – who will get the money first? Education or health? Or will it end up on some other dodgy deal that Zuma's ANC plans?

The DA supports Universal Access to Healthcare. It is a must for our country. However, a look at what is happening in KZN tells us that NHI is going nowhere slowly. In fact, the overall picture is one of a big NHI ship turning slowly in a direction completely opposite to Universal Access to Healthcare.

To start with, there is an inability to retain private GPs to service the system with the state only managing to retain 49 doctors to date. Then there is the fact that only two out of 11 district specialist health teams are complete, with many critical posts vacant, not only at the KZN Department of Health's (DoH) head office but at almost every major and minor facility too.

In terms of nursing, the turnover of staff is very high with a massive vacancy rate and an inability to retain specialists. Add to this the massive political patronage and victimisation of staff from porters to senior staff.

Currently, only two KZN health facilities are in full compliance with the toothless Office of Healthcare Standards requirements – set up to manage standards for the planned NHI and so much more.

All of this is not only as a result of budgetary constraints. It follows the AG's red flags of massive corruption, presented to the health portfolio committee and to the provincial SCOPA.

But perhaps it is the lame duck response to this by KZN Health MEC Sibongiseni Dhlomo that should really set off alarm bells when he says he doesn't know what to do about Supply Chain Management in his department. If he is unable to deal with it, then he should pack his bags and go.

The DA in KZN has suggested to the MEC on several occasions that he visit the Western Cape where the department has a clean audit. This under the former provincial minister Botha, who is not medically trained. We say this because the ANC naively believes that only a medically trained person can run KZN's DoH.

Western Cape Health Minister Mbombo has made sure that the DA's vision of Universal Access to Healthcare is core and that the department she now oversees is the best in South Africa.

This is the type of commitment and governance that the citizens of KZN deserve. Not one that is crumbling under an incompetent Minister Motsoaledi and his ANC MECs.

By DR IMRAN KEEKA, MPL

DA KZN Spokesperson on Health