

ANC looks to axe medical aid tax credits, expand National Health Insurance

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The ruling party says it's time to get serious about funding and rolling out SA's universal health plan.

Your medical aid tax credits could be back on the chopping block if a decision by the education and health subcommittee of the ANC's national executive committee is anything to go by. The committee of social transformation also affirmed its commitment to decriminalising sex work, which could help reduce new HIV infections by, for instance, allowing workers better access to health services and safe working conditions.

The education and health subcommittee says the party will continue to support axing almost R20-billion in medical aid tax credits in order to fund the National Health Insurance (NHI). The announcement comes just months after Finance Minister Malusi Gigaba hinted that cuts to tax credits were unlikely to materialise after National Treasury was found that it would hurt low-income earners, according to the Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement.

The subcommittee, which decides the ANC's health policy agenda, is also calling for expanding the number of NHI pilot sites across the country. Currently, 11 districts nationally have begun implementing NHI reforms, including the creation of community health teams and the recruitment of private GPs to work part-time in public facilities.

"It was really felt that we need to see government accelerating and taking concrete steps in the implementation of the NHI," explained committee chairperson and Minister of Science and Technology Naledi Pandor.

"It was particularly felt that... we perhaps need to look at expanding the number as an indication of our concrete commitment to the NHI," she says.

And while the committee of social transformation said it would continue to support decriminalising sex work, the body was mum on the status of discussions at branch level about decriminalising the profession. Meanwhile, it says the party continues to advocate for broadened access to drug rehabilitation services and is supporting the current review of national substance abuse policies as South Africa works to draft its next Drug Master Plan.