

Public not worried enough about national health insurance – Solidarity – Citizen 18 July 2018

Solidarity says South Africa is experiencing shortages in the numbers of both taxpayers and health practitioners, and would suffer further losses if the NHI is implemented.

Trade union Solidarity said on Wednesday South Africa's proposed national health insurance (NHI) would have the opposite effect of its aim to give all citizens decent access to health care.

Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi announced the NHI bill last month, detailing a health financing system designed to pool funds to provide access to affordable health care.

He said the government was now in the fifth year of the 14-year NHI implementation phase.

In terms of the government's own models, the economy was not growing fast enough to fund the proposal, and all pilot projects undertaken so far had "failed dismally", Solidarity Research Institute researcher Morné Malan said on Wednesday.

"The public seems not to be sufficiently concerned about the drastic impact implementation of this system will have," Malan said. "The NHI amounts to nothing less than a de facto nationalisation of South Africa's healthcare system."

He said the NHI would effectively become the largest state enterprise in South Africa's history, bigger than cash-strapped state power utility Eskom and national airliner SAA put together.

"Judged by the current state of affairs at both Eskom and the SAA this move bodes ill for the future of health care," Malan said.

He said South Africa was experiencing serious shortages in the numbers of both taxpayers and health practitioners alike, and stood to suffer further losses if the NHI was implemented and resulted in those that could leave the country doing so.

"In essence, this de facto nationalisation of our health care means that the country's health services will be run by the very same bureaucrats who had to deal with the Life Esidimeni tragedy and the Charlotte Maxeke disaster," Malan pointed out.

More than 140 people died from starvation and neglect at psychiatric facilities in Gauteng province after being removed from private healthcare provider Life Esidimeni. Patients went unattended at the Charlotte Maxeke public hospital in Johannesburg after hundreds of workers shut down the hospital in May over unpaid bonuses.

Supporters of the proposed new health legislation say opposition to it is largely influenced by sections of the private healthcare sector and pharmaceutical companies benefiting from excessive health costs.

According to the World Health Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, only 10% of South Africa's population can afford what is currently being charged in private health care.

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