

## **Limpopo hospital in dire state: SAHRC finds dirty areas, rotting and expired food – News24 26 July 2019**

A routine SA Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) inspection of Messina Hospital has exposed some shocking conditions - including dirty areas and rotten food - and the CEO has conceded there are not enough staff to clean and manage it.

SAHRC chairperson Bongani Majola visited the hospital in Musina, Limpopo, on Monday and found that it was more "dilapidated and dirty" than expected.

Majola found expired food including cereal and yoghurt, amongst other foodstuffs that could still be consumed, leading to concerns that expired food could be served to patients.

He also found rotting fruit in the storeroom.

"The storeroom for the vegetables and fruits has not been cleaned for some time," Majola told News24.

However, he pointed out that there was no evidence that patients had consumed expired food.

Majola said it was evident that staff had neglected to properly clean food storage areas and remove rotten food.

### **Cracks, peeling paint, leaks**

Majola also said the kitchen manager was surprised to see expired food. She had told him she worked in the kitchen alone and had other responsibilities in the hospital too, he said,

The commission is also worried about the structural state of the hospital, having noted visible cracks and peeling paint, as well as roof leaks.

Majola said several areas in the hospital were dirty and in an unsatisfactory condition, which showed clear signs that the hospital had not been managed properly.

According to the commission, the CEO of the hospital conceded that the issues found at the hospital were as a result of understaffing.

Also, there was no budget to hire additional staff

Limpopo Department of Health spokesperson Neil Shikwambana denied the commission's claims that expired food was kept among the fresh food.

Shikwambana said not anyone could dispose of food in a hospital setup and that an environmental health practitioner would come in to get rid of the expired food.

### **NHI pilot programme**

As a result of this process, expired food was put aside in a separate area from the fresh food, for disposal.

In terms of the dilapidation of the hospital structure, Shikwambana said the building was over 100 years old and the reason that there had been no recent renovations was a result of a National Health Insurance (NHI) pilot programme.

He said the hospital fell under the Vhembe district, which will be part of the NHI pilot programme to look at building new facilities and renovating others.

Because of this, renovating the hospital now would amount to wasteful expenditure as it is an intended beneficiary of the NHI pilot.

The department conceded there was a shortage of staff, but said they were in the advanced stages of hiring general workers, such as cleaners and groundsmen.