

**State of the Province Address by Premier Alan Winde
15 February 2022
Velddrif Town Hall**

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Note to editors: please check this prepared written speech against delivery.

“We must push back against going back to normal, and we must push forward so that we do even better”

Introduction

Honourable Speaker,

Honourable The Leader of the Opposition,

Honourable Members,

Special guests present here today,

People of the Western Cape,

And, of course, most importantly you, the residents of Velldrif and the Weskus.

Thank you so much for hosting the Opening of our Provincial Parliament in your town and for giving me an opportunity to share my plans for the province with you today.

I love coming here to the Weskus.

It is not just the famous home of bikkoms, rooibos and the mighty Cederberg.

It is also a place of tenacity and resilience, demonstrated every day by the communities across this region.

I think especially of the fishing communities like the one right here in Velldrif, and how, despite the greatest of challenges, you still get up, get out and “set sail”.

I think there is a lot we can learn from these communities today.

Not only in what we as a government should be focussing more on, but also in how we must be as resilient and tenacious as they are. We must, like they do, get up, get out and “set sail” again.

This is more important than ever before.

We have had nearly two years of loss caused by a global pandemic that not only took many of our loved ones away but took away our jobs and our hope too.

This year, things have to change. We have to get up, get out, and “set sail” again.

I often hear people say: I wish we could go back to normal. You know, the way things were before.

I completely understand the sentiment - in comparison to lockdowns, loss of life, and economic hardship, the past can look appealing.

But I must respectfully disagree.

We cannot and must not go back to normal.

The demands on us as a government are greater than ever before. The damage caused by the pandemic is significant. And the resources at our disposal to address this challenge are currently not sufficient.

Normal is not going to close this gap.

We have, in my view, only one option.

We must rethink, we must focus, and we must innovate, so that we don't only recover, but we do better than before.

Speaker,

Today I am going to set out our plan to push back against going back to normal and push forward towards doing even better.

So that we deliver the dignity and well-being that every person in our province deserves.

Normalising our COVID-19 response and looking to the future

Before I discuss some of the changes that are required of us at this important moment, I want to set out why we have reached a point where we can and must change.

As I have said throughout this pandemic, we must always be evidence-led and data-driven.

On the one hand, the evidence points clearly to the Western Cape, and indeed the rest of South Africa, reaching a stage where we can normalise our response to COVID-19.

Data provided by our Department of Health shows us that:

- 90% of people surveyed in a seroprevalence study in November 2021 had protection against COVID-19, either through vaccination or through prior infection.
- That the Omicron variant has caused less severe disease because of prior immunity and is less virulent than previous strains.
- And that 59.7% of residents over 50, and 68.5% of residents over 60 specifically are now also fully vaccinated in the Western Cape.

This has meant that despite having the highest number of cases at the peak of our fourth wave, our hospitalisations, oxygen usage and deaths remained relatively low.

This new stage provides us with a window of opportunity to make the bold changes that are now needed, so that we push back against going back to normal and so that we push forward, to do even better.

Why we cannot and must not go back to normal – fighting our pandemic of joblessness

Because on the other hand, we face a crisis too big to ignore, and one that requires our immediate intervention. This is what I have often called “pandemic number two”, a pandemic of joblessness and hunger.

The data does not lie. From the first quarter of 2020 to the third quarter of 2021, unemployment in the Western Cape increased by 132 000. While we still have the lowest expanded unemployment rate in South Africa, this statistic is very worrying.

And according to the General Household Survey, the percentage of households with adults present, who experience hunger due to a lack of food sometimes, often or always, increased from 11.3% in 2019 to 17% in 2020.

These challenges have been compounded by the failure of national departments and entities to deliver critical services in our province.

- We do not have enough SAPS resources, especially in our poorest communities, with an average of just 1 police officer for 507 people.
- The mismanagement and corruption of PRASA has meant that our rail network is in complete disarray. This is worsened by cable theft and other damage to infrastructure.
- The Port of Cape Town, which should be a booming gateway to growth and jobs, is slow and inefficient.
- And of course, Eskom's load-shedding continues to burden our small businesses and disrupt the lives of our residents, with a single stage costing our provincial economy R75 million a day.

COVID-19 taught us that we can innovate and breakdown silos

Speaker,

I could go on setting out many other challenges that we face as a province and as a country.

But I think the time for diagnosis is over. It's now time to do something about it.

That is exactly what we did during the COVID-19 pandemic and it is this energy that I want to harness.

When we were confronted with the virus and the prospect of the pain and the loss that it would inevitably bring, we didn't complain. We got going, and we innovated.

- We built the biggest field hospital in Africa in record time.
- We pioneered innovations like the award-winning VECTOR programme, where we monitored over 20 000 diabetic residents and reduced their chances of dying significantly.
- We had nearly 2.2 million parcels of medicine delivered directly to people's homes so that they did not need to queue at our facilities and risk getting infected.
- We launched the Red Dot Taxi service, which safely transported our healthcare workers to work during curfew.
- We launched the biggest vaccination programme in our province's history. And when we confronted vaccine hesitancy and challenges with access in some communities, we innovated again by launching Vaxi Taxis, which we then expanded with private sector support.

On this note, I would like to welcome one of my special guests today, Betty Zodumo Duli-Mkinase. Betty runs Siyakula soup kitchen in Gugulethu, and is a person I admire greatly.

Not only is she working tirelessly to feed those in need, but she also partnered with our Vaxi Taxi initiative to get people near her soup kitchen vaccinated. She mobilized many people and I believe saved countless lives. Thank you, Betty, and welcome here today. Nkosi kakhulu MaBetty.

Speaker,

For me, the most important lesson from our COVID-19 experience is that we are capable of breaking down silos, and working quicker and more in sync.

This is what we need to do again, so that we push back against going back to normal and so that we push forward, to do even better.

It's time to end the National State of Disaster

Speaker,

Pushing forward in this way does require that we be brave and make bold decisions, as we have had to do throughout the pandemic.

That is why, I am disappointed that President Ramaphosa did not go all the way, and announce during his State of the Nation Address that the National State of Disaster would expire today.

Of course, it is completely understandable that alternative measures need to be put in place using existing public health legislation.

But we must ask, why has it taken so long for this to happen, when we knew already last year that this was required.

I have asked for a meeting with the President so that we can get the full roadmap for exiting the National State of Disaster, including exact timelines. To be clear: we want the date and the time, and not generalised commitments.

Our North Stars: Dignity through Jobs and Safety

Speaker,

In October 2020, I delivered a special address to you that set out this government's priorities for recovery.

As I set out then, we were to be guided by our "north stars" of jobs, safety and dignity, that are all fundamentally interconnected. Without one, the other cannot be achieved. Together, they are a recipe for real change.

The significant loss of jobs during the pandemic has meant that this delicate balance has been damaged, and many other areas that determine progress have worsened because of it.

That is why our single biggest priority in the year ahead must be to create an environment where the private sector creates jobs and lots of them.

We must fight back against our pandemic of joblessness.

Because a job puts food on the table.

A job keeps a child in school.

A job can keep a young man off the street and out of a gang.

And a job can mean a healthier, happier and longer life for you.

So, Speaker,

If the last two years were dominated by our response to COVID-19, the next two years will be about helping businesses create jobs, and lots of them.

This will be my government's obsession. It will guide everything we do.

But for this to be made a reality we will need to invest what resources we have at our disposal carefully so that we get the best possible outcome, helping the private sector create the most possible jobs, in a sustainable and inclusive way.

There are clear pathways to achieve this objective: firstly and most importantly, in facilitating private sector investment that creates jobs. Secondly, and linked to this, to invest in catalytic infrastructure that responds to their needs, making it easier for them to grow and employ more people.

A new department of infrastructure to be created in the Western Cape.

Speaker,

The Western Cape Government is currently responsible for nearly 29% of all infrastructure spend in the province, mostly through education, health, social and transport infrastructure investment.

Since 2019, we have spent over R19 billion on infrastructure across our departments.

Two departments, in particular, are primarily responsible for this spend, that being the Department of Transport and Public Works and the Department of Human Settlements.

Together, they are responsible for spending R18 billion on new projects over the next 3 years and they have a combined total budget of R11.5 billion in the 2021/22 adjusted budget.

In the existing structure of our government, however, there is no individual infrastructure department where all the programmes can be carefully considered and aligned to ensure the greatest impact.

It is my view that this needs to change, especially if we are going to focus, innovate and do more with less, to push back against going back to normal, so that we push forward to do even better.

I have therefore, after careful consideration, decided that a new Department solely responsible for Infrastructure will be created in the Western Cape, through the merger of the Human Settlements Department, and specific components of the Transport and Public Works Department, including the Western Cape's property portfolio and our road programmes.

This Infrastructure Department will be tasked with leading the change, working together with local governments in the Western Cape, the National Government as well as the private sector to ensure that we collectively complete quality, catalytic infrastructure projects that will help create jobs in an inclusive way. They will also take forward the establishment of a Schedule 3D Infrastructure Entity.

As part of this change, we will create a Department responsible for Mobility, which will include our transport programmes, such as our financial support to bus and taxi services, including our Blue Dot Taxi pilot, our transport regulation mandate, and our extensive traffic management operations.

This Department will also focus on finding specific, innovative strategies to improve mobility in the Western Cape, especially in the greater Cape Town area, given the very serious failings of the National rail network. They will be our lead department for working with and finding solutions with our local governments and, most importantly, PRASA.

Following this policy announcement today, we will embark on a detailed consultation programme with all stakeholders and will provide regular updates both internally and to the public, so that this process is efficient, fair and transparent.

Speaker,

We also plan to match this new focus on job-creating infrastructure by committing the funding it requires to succeed.

While the Minister of Finance and Economic Opportunities will set out his plans to budget for this priority in more detail next month, I can today also confirm that we plan to substantially increase our infrastructure spend over the 2022 MTEF.

We will soon see cranes, excavators and road-graders across the Western Cape!

Health Infrastructure

Speaker,

One area that we intend to focus on is on health infrastructure because a well-run, modern healthcare system will ensure that our people live a longer and healthier life.

I can therefore announce today that we are planning five mega health infrastructure projects over the medium-to-long term that will significantly modernise this platform to ensure that we have a pipeline right into the future.

- These include the Belhar, Klipfontein and Helderberg Regional Hospitals, the Tygerberg Central Hospital development and the Swartland District Hospital.
- Preparation is commencing for the Belhar and Klipfontein Regional hospitals, and detailed planning to enable a Public-Private Partnership for the Tygerberg Central Hospital development has also begun, working in collaboration with the World Bank.

- This is in addition to the completion of the Helderberg Hospital Emergency Centre, the Gansbaai Clinic, the Laingsburg Clinic, the Victoria Hospital Emergency Centre and the Observatory Forensic Pathology Institute.

Education Infrastructure

Speaker,

Investing in our children is an investment in our province's future. They are the most precious resource that we have.

That is why we will continue to invest in education infrastructure that will benefit generations to come, while creating jobs for our residents.

- The new Delft North Primary School has been completed and the Moorreesburg High School project is planned for completion by the end of the 2022/23 financial year.
- The replacement schools of Chatsworth Primary School here in the West Coast, Panorama Primary School in Vredenburg, also in the West Coast, and Umyezo Wama Apile Primary School in Grabouw are all under construction.
- We also have six new mobile schools anticipated for completion in 2022/2023, in Bothasig, Fisantekraal, Nomzamo, Klapmuts (which includes one high school and one primary school), and Silversands.
- This is in addition to a total of 10 schools which were completed successfully in the last financial year.

This will include employing around 1100 new teachers this year to ensure we have the required capacity.

We will also complete security fencing of another 30 schools this financial year, and will increase this number to 60 over the next financial year, as part of our Provincial Safety Plan.

While these fences help protect our schools, they will never be as effective as communities standing together to prevent vandalism.

So, I urge members of the public and civil society to be our eyes and ears, and report any suspicious activity around your neighborhood's school to the police as soon as possible.

Economic Infrastructure

Speaker,

If we are to attract investment and enable the private sector to create jobs, we need to invest in assets that facilitate economic growth. This includes quality roads that enable our goods to be transported and sold at home and abroad.

That is why since 2019 we have invested R6 billion on road infrastructure, with half being spent on maintaining the existing network, and the other half on new construction.

We intend to continue with this investment over the next financial year by launching 3 new road upgrade projects.

This is in addition to 91 road projects currently in progress in various phases, worth approximately R3 billion.

It is also in addition to a number of road projects which were successfully completed recently.

- We opened the R60 million, 7.49km Haaskraal Road Project in the Cape Winelands District near Wellington.
- We opened the newly upgraded R61 (Aberdeen Road) in the Central Karoo. This road was notorious for crashes and a high number of fatalities, and so its upgrade will also provide for improved safety.
- And we opened the Ashton Arch Bridge, which was the first concrete tied arch bridge constructed using this specific method.

Speaker,

The Atlantis Special Economic Zone for Green Technology and the Saldanha Bay Industrial Development Zone demonstrate exactly what is possible when you ensure infrastructure-focussed, private-sector friendly policies. We will continue to invest in these hubs.

- The Atlantis SEZ which was recently gazetted by National Treasury as a Schedule 3D public enterprise, has now completed the last milestone required to become fully operational.
- This approval now enables the SEZ to transact with Investors, tenants and partners towards creating jobs, increasing business revenue and stimulating the Western Cape economy.
- To date, it has secured over R790 million in investment, with 2 investors expanding in this financial year, creating over 400 jobs. This year, we plan to secure an additional 3 investors for the SEZ.
- We are also aggressively recruiting investment for the Saldanha Bay IDZ. Despite numerous challenges, the IDZ helped create 2000 jobs this financial year.

Speaker,

The wide-spread corruption and state-capture at the national level over the last decade has meant that important infrastructure needed for growth is sometimes lacking in the Western Cape.

We are committed to doing as much as we can to limit the blow on our residents and our businesses by investing in alternative infrastructure and “filling the gap”.

One area of particular concern for us has been Eskom’s load-shedding.

That is why we have taken a number of steps to ensure that we leverage new, green infrastructure in our province. As a result of hard-slog efforts to become energy resilient:

- It is now legal in 24 Western Cape municipalities to produce Solar PV energy, with 19 of these municipalities allowing you to be compensated for feeding back into the grid.
- Additionally, wheeling (which is the private-to-private trading of energy) across municipal networks is being explored in 7 Western Cape municipalities given the recent unlocking of national electricity regulations.
- A successful Request for Information for the Municipal Energy Resilience (MER) initiative has been issued, which has solicited information from more than 100 potential energy generation projects.
- This information has informed five potential pioneering projects based on Solar PV and wind energy. And a roadmap to implement these projects has been extensively defined through technical, financial and legal analysis.

We are on track to be the first province to beat load-shedding in South Africa.

Social Housing Infrastructure

Speaker,

Investment in social infrastructure will help address the painful legacy of our divided past, by improving basic service delivery, building integrated communities and enabling our residents to live with dignity.

Since the start of this government’s term of office, we have provided over 32 000 housing opportunities, helping create over 2700 job opportunities in the Western Cape.

Later today, I will have the opportunity to see the joy that homeownership brings when I personally hand over a title deed to Tannie Eva Daniels who is 84-years-old, and who is a beneficiary of the Noordhoek Housing Project here in Velddrif.

We are also prioritizing creating social housing opportunities close to economic hubs, so that those who do not qualify for a free housing opportunity can access this support.

That is why I was extremely excited to launch the first social housing units at the Conradie Park development two weeks ago.

- This R3 billion project on the 22-hectare former Conradie Hospital site in Pinelands was a pilot for the Better Living Model which was designed to create 3 500

residentially-led, mixed-use, mixed-income housing opportunities close to the Cape Town CBD where people can live, work, play and learn.

- Construction of the first phase of the social housing part of the project started in August 2020 and will, when completed, consist of 432 units located in four blocks.
- And by the end of 2022, an additional 1 120 units will be under construction, as part of this project.

Another catalytic infrastructure project is the Belhar CBD development, which is already under construction.

This partnership development with the University of the Western Cape will consist of various types of residential units, which includes Social Housing and FLISP units.

- Nearly 1200 units have already been developed in total, of which 765 affordable housing units have been delivered and transferred during the past 2 years.
- A further 308 affordable housing units will be completed and transferred by March 2022.
- And construction of the 2720-bed student accommodation which is implemented in partnership with the University of the Western Cape is nearing completion during the 2022/2023 financial year.

Speaker,

We will soon be adding another social housing development to this mix through the Founders Garden Artscape Precinct development, which is smack-middle in the Cape Town CBD.

While still in the planning phase, it is projected that this project could create over 500 social housing units depending on its density.

- To get this project off the ground, we have so far determined the project feasibility on a financial, legal and technical level, which are critical first steps.
- We have also designed the development procurement documentation that includes a Request for Proposal and a draft Sale & Development Agreement.

We remain fully committed to fulfilling all conditions and plans for this social housing project so that we can advertise the Request for Proposals as soon as possible.

Speaker,

If you will allow me, I want to mention a few other exciting social housing developments that are underway.

- The Bothasig Gardens Social Housing Project is completed and currently finalising tenant agreements.
- Construction has commenced with the Maitland Mews social housing project which will deliver over 200 new rental units.

- The first non-metro social housing project has been approved in the Drakenstein Municipality, intending to provide 362 new social rental units.
- Construction will commence soon on the first deferred ownership project in the Western Cape, in the Cape Agulhas municipality. This will provide FLISP units to qualifying beneficiaries and enable residents who have not been successful in accessing finance to take out an option to purchase the house in future.

We have also now received public comment on the Western Cape's new Inclusionary Housing Framework, which will soon come before the provincial cabinet for consideration. This framework, which leverages our development planning powers, will see many other mixed-use developments in the future.

Social services infrastructure

Speaker,

The Western Cape Government is committed to investing in infrastructure that expands important government services to our people, so that residents are connected, informed and receive important social services.

- I am pleased to note that the Brandwag modular library in Mosselbay has been completed and is operational, and I am excited to join the launch of the Noordhoek Public library upgrade, right here in Velddrif, later today.
- We will commence with infrastructure upgrades including new living units and classrooms at the Outeniekwa Child and Youth Centre, which will become operational this month.
- We are the only province to fully operationalise all 6 GBV shelters, following the handover of property from the National Government.
- Our broadband roll-out project is currently in phase 2 and we aim to upgrade all 1910 sites to a minimum of 100Mbps by 30 September 2022. Phase 3 will upgrade minimum speeds to 1 Gbps from 1 October 2022.
- Finally, the municipalities of Swellendam and Hessequa will benefit this coming financial year from the continued roll-out of the Regional Socio-Economic Projects Programme, which has already resulted in over 100 projects across 12 municipalities in poor communities.

Sustainable growth

Speaker,

As we develop, we need to grow sustainably and respond to the challenges created by Climate Change, while protecting important ecosystems in our province.

- That is why I signed the Western Cape's Biodiversity Bill into law in December last year. This act clarifies the relationship between CapeNature and the Department and will protect our environment, while also contributing to sustainable economic growth.
- Our Western Cape Climate Change Response Strategy – Vision 2050 is now out for external comment and sets out our government's commitment to building a resilient, non-carbon future in a sustainable way.

- We will rehabilitate the riparian areas of the Berg-and-Breede River catchments, including the clearing of invasive alien species.
- And our Department of Agriculture will launch 5 extensive river protection plans.

Infrastructure projects supported by National Government

Speaker,

I welcome the announcement by President Ramaphosa during his State of the Nation Address that his government will also be prioritising spending on infrastructure to stimulate economic growth and create jobs.

We will support his focus on infrastructure because we know that if all levels of government play their part, by delivering on projects on time, without corruption and financial mismanagement, there will be a much greater impact.

The Presidency had previously written to us to request “shovel-ready” infrastructure projects in the Western Cape that could be supported by the National Government.

After submitting a range of projects, we have received confirmation that 5 priority projects have been submitted for registration and are being considered for support.

They are:

- The Wingfield Interchange between the N1 and N7.
- Investment in Saldanha Bay Port Infrastructure.
- The Belhar and Klipfontein Regional Hospitals, which forms part of our health platform upgrade.
- The Tygerberg Hospital public-private partnership, which I previously mentioned.
- And enabling the expansion of Biovac by relocating our EMS building to another location, providing Biovac with the necessary space to expand.

We look forward to receiving national government support and funding for these projects, and many others that will follow, so that we can do even more with the resources that we have at our disposal.

Premier to take responsibility for coordinating response to joblessness pandemic through extended jobs cabinet

Speaker,

This focus on creating jobs to fight the second pandemic of unemployment requires our unwavering commitment.

I will repeat again: this government will be obsessed with creating jobs in the Western Cape.

During the COVID-19 crisis, I played a central role in ensuring our government worked together to respond efficiently, by introducing a number of management systems including our extended cabinet, our management committees, right down to our weekly digital press conferences, where we were fully transparent with the people of the Western Cape.

This was necessary to ensure that all levels of government and our own departments worked together to achieve our common goal of preparing for the impact of COVID-19 so that we saved lives.

I intend to replicate this model in our fight against joblessness so that we achieve the same effect. I will therefore set up an extended jobs cabinet that will consist of our new Infrastructure and Mobility departments, as well as the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, the Department of Agriculture and the Provincial Treasury. I will also include private sector representatives so that we lead with interventions that will unlock growth and help businesses employ more people.

This means, Speaker, that I not only take responsibility for getting our jobs back, but that I encourage you to hold me accountable if I do not.

We must be prepared to rethink, focus and innovate if we want to push back against going back to normal, and push forward to do even better. And I will leave from the front to make sure this happens.

Speaker,

I am also confident that we will be successful if we work together in this way. We have a strong economic base from which we can claw back jobs and become a leading regional economy globally.

- Our agricultural sector continues to grow, and create jobs, with our exports growing over the last five years.
- We are Africa's green tech hub, an important future economy.
- We are Africa's BPO Capital.
- We remain a top travel destination in Africa, with a promising recovery in international arrivals being recorded this past month.
- We have the best-run, most stable municipalities in the country - by far.
- And, according to Global Startup Ecosystem Report 2021, Cape Town is listed as the number one performer in Africa for technology ecosystems and is home to almost two-thirds of all start-ups in South Africa. We are truly Africa's Tech Capital.

Another special guest of mine can tell you all about our growing start-up economy. Welcome, Marlon Parker - the founder of RLabs.

RLabs is an organisation born in the Cape Flats. In recognition of innovative work, Mr Parker was awarded social innovator of the year by the World Economic Forum and Schwab Foundation.

RLabs have trained over 200 000 individuals in 23 countries, helping create 90 000 job opportunities. And they are from right here in the Western Cape. Thank you, Marlon!

Speaker,

The signs of a recovery are there - it is up to us to do everything we can to help the private sector grow and create jobs as quickly as possible by pursuing private-sector-led growth policies.

That is why, in addition to our focus on infrastructure, we will also take a number of other steps to help grow our economy.

- We will establish an SMME Booster Fund which will support organisations that provide business development support in the Western Cape.
- The Red Tape Reduction Unit will ramp up its efforts to cut red tape.
- We will continue to focus on resolving the inefficiencies at the Port of Cape Town, through research and advocacy - especially to improve service levels.
- We will scale up experiential learning programmes, which incentivizes the employment of unemployed youth through the payment of stipends.
- We will assist companies that want to move to the Western Cape from other provinces and from other countries.
- We will, through our official tourism, trade and investment agency, Wesgro, increase our destination marketing within South Africa and abroad to attract visitors back to the Western Cape.
- Wesgro will also work hard to sign in excess of R2 billion in investment deals and in excess of R3 billion in exports deals over the next year.
- And we will promote their new dedicated remote work portal that assists long-stay travellers, and continue to promote our province as the best remote work destination in the world.

Department of Community Safety to increase focus on Police Oversight

Speaker,

While creating jobs will be this government's obsession, we know that to live with dignity, you need more than a job. You also need to live in a safe community, where you and your family can move around without fear.

That is why at the start of my Premiership in the Western Cape, I also committed to building safer communities across the province, by halving the murder rate by 2029.

To do so, we adopted the most extensive Provincial Safety Plan in South Africa, which has now resulted in 1056 Law Enforcement Advancement Programme (LEAP) officers being trained and deployed, through the City of Cape Town, to thirteen high-crime police precincts.

- The working hours of these LEAP members were also amended to a 24-hour shift system which resulted in an increase in deployments over weekends when murders increased according to our data.
- A Reaction Unit consisting of LEAP members was established to urgently respond to outbreaks of violence when it occurs.
- As part of this plan, Area Based teams have been established in eleven of the high crime areas in the Cape Town Metro and one each in Swartland, Theewaterskloof, Witzenberg, George and Beaufort West local municipalities. There will be 16 in total.
- ABT Liaison officers have also been appointed for all 16 ABT areas. The main purpose of the liaison officers is to focus on relationship building between the different stakeholders in the areas to ensure better collaboration in addressing local safety challenges.

We have so far had excellent cooperation from the South African Police Services, the National Prosecution Authority, the Western Cape Liquor Authority, and the City's Metro Police Services in this initiative.

I want to thank them all for the support they have provided to our innovative safety approach and hope that they will continue to work with us in tackling violence going forward through a successful whole-of-government approach.

Speaker,

I am immensely proud of this programme and what has been achieved in just two and a half years. The most recent quarterly crime statistics demonstrate that extra resources in communities where the murder rate is high, can have a noticeable effect. In fact, the Western Cape was the only province to record a stabilisation in the murder rate in the latest crime statistics release.

While we continue with this data-led “boots-on-the-ground” intervention, we must not forget that we have a constitutional responsibility to provide oversight over the police, so that they deliver the quality services that we need to beat crime.

As we rethink, focus and innovate to do even better, we intend to take this oversight role even more seriously - and not just at the national level, but at the local level too.

We will therefore significantly expand our monitoring of police stations across the province, with a focus on GBV and domestic violence responses, police conduct, visible policing, and crime investigation efficiency. The Department of Community Safety will also accordingly be renamed the Department of Police Oversight and Community Safety in the Western Cape.

We are today sending a very clear message to the National Government that we intend to assert as much pressure as we can, including the option of reopening our intergovernmental dispute, so that we finally correct the historical under-resourcing of the Western Cape.

***A first for South Africa: Violence Prevention Unit to be established in Western Cape
Department of Health***

Speaker,

When we set out to implement this extensive Safety Plan, having more boots on the ground was only one half of the plan.

We, of course, need more law enforcement officers in crime hotspots, especially given the national government's under-resourcing of the province, but we also need violence prevention interventions that prevent violent crime from happening in the first place.

The approach that we adopted to achieve this is a public health approach based on the Cardiff Model of Violence Prevention. This model, which has seen great success in other regions in the world, requires a data-led, evidence-based approach to crime and

violence prevention, with data down to geographic level determining localised interventions required to reduce violence.

We have combined this with the many evidence-based lessons from the World Health Organisation and other local knowledge, which has given us clear guidance on what works to reduce violence.

Speaker,

If we are to halve our murder rate by 2029 we need to take this violence prevention component of our plan to the next level. We indeed need to rethink, focus and innovate in this space too so that we push back against going back to normal, and push forward to do even better.

It is for this reason, guided by the Cardiff Model, that we plan to create a dedicated Violence Prevention Unit in the Western Cape's Department of Health.

This will be the first violence prevention unit established by a government in South Africa.

Our Health Department is best placed to house this unit:

- It is already the frontline in our battle against violence, with trauma cases ending up in our Emergency Rooms. We, as a result, have emergency centre data across the province that enables us to identify exactly what crime is taking place, where and how.
- More broadly, our Health Department tracks data that can help us better understand violence, including alcohol-related harms, gender-based violence or children at risk of violence, to name a few. This data is being converted into intelligence that can inform localised interventions.
- This analysis is possible because our health department was the first in the country to go digital, including 265 primary healthcare centres, 181 mobile posts, 51 acute and specialised hospitals, 28 intermediate care facilities, 49 EMS stations and 17 Forensic Pathology laboratories.
- The department already adopts a public health approach to address many health problems. And, as the holder of one of our core competencies, this department has the size, reach and capacity to put real momentum behind this project.

While this dedicated violence prevention unit will be responsible for identifying and designing interventions to reduce violence in communities across the province through an evidence-based public health strategy, they will leverage an all-of-society approach to implementing these initiatives, in conjunction with partners at the local and national levels.

This will be done, specifically, through the Area Based Teams, which will be coordinated by this new unit.

This focus on violence prevention will also include tackling our province's deadly relationship with alcohol, which as our pioneering HECTIS surveillance programme demonstrates, is a major cause for violent crime in our province.

On this point, Speaker, I would like to update you on the proposed amendments to the Western Cape Liquor Act, which I discussed at my SOPA last year.

- Firstly, our Provincial Cabinet has now granted in principle approval for the first set of amendments to the Western Cape Liquor Amendment Bill to be drafted.
- Drafting instructions are now in an advanced stage, and should be completed imminently.
- The next steps will include a full Regulatory Impact Assessment process of the second set of proposed amendments to the bill.
- This two-step amendment process is to ensure that quick-win amendments can be made as soon as possible, and not be delayed by more significant changes that will require an extensive public participation process.

I want to make a commitment that our approach to tackling alcohol-related harms will not be done in a way that hurts the economy and costs jobs. We simply cannot afford that in the current economic climate.

We, however, cannot let the status quo continue either. We must be innovative and targeted in our approach so that we end this deadly relationship once and for all.

We will step up our response to GBV in the Western Cape

Speaker,

It is without a doubt that Gender-Based Violence is a major problem in our province and in our country. It requires our urgent attention.

What lies behind it is a culture of violence and of treating people as if they were objects, and not human beings. It not only creates immense harm, but it also takes away a person's sense of empowerment and agency, undermining their ability to chart their own course and to live a full and rewarding life.

Right now, and at every other second of the day, an incident of GBV will go unnoticed, unreported and unpunished.

If we are to really bring an end to this crisis in our communities, this impunity has to end. And we need to do much more, not only as a government, but as civil society, as the private sector, as families and as private individuals. We all have a role to play.

Currently, in my own cabinet, allegations of this nature have been made against Minister Albert Fritz. I have therefore suspended the Minister and instituted an Independent investigation by Advocate Jennifer Williams, which is currently underway to determine the veracity of the allegations.

I hope to receive this report soon, so that I can consider what action is needed in terms of my own powers.

Speaker,

I want to use this opportunity today to unequivocally commit to playing my part in the fight against GBV, by ensuring that my government does more than its bit to end this scourge.

Following my announcement during my SOPA last year that the Western Cape Government will adopt a GBV Implementation Plan, I am happy to confirm that the Provincial Cabinet has now adopted it and that key interventions have been identified and agreed upon to be prioritised by all 13 Heads of Departments.

The transversal nature of this plan is fundamental because GBV is not just the responsibility of the Department of Social Development. Every department has a role to play.

That is why:

The Western Cape Department of Education is:

- Training teachers as part of their "Abuse No more" training, on their responsibility to report sexual offences against children.
- They will also continue to leverage their Safe School Officers at District Level for this purpose, as well as their Care and Support assistants at 160 schools.
- And they will pursue awareness and empowerment interventions, such as through the Adolescent Girls and Young Women's Programme at an identified 25 schools.

The Department of Community Safety will:

- Identify GBV hotspots down to the geographic level and work with LEAP officers to ensure visible policing. This includes support to Neighbourhood Watches in these areas.
- The Department will also continue to monitor the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act and the role played by the SAPS in the registration of domestic violence incidents, including the investigation of those criminal cases.
- And they will monitor the functioning of victim friendly rooms and use the Court Watching Brief Unit to monitor the protection of victims at court.

The Department of Social Development is:

- Providing psychosocial, care, and support services to survivors of GBV.
- The Department is also focussing on the implementation of the Trafficking in Persons Act within the Western Cape.
- They are expanding bed spaces in existing shelters, ensuring specialised GBV training of shelter staff and management.

The Department also continues with its Victim Offender Mediation Programme, with a total of 945 perpetrators of GBV offences and their victims completing the programme at the Mitchells Plain and Gugulethu Community Courts, as well as at the Strand and Somerset West Magistrate's court.

The Department of Health is:

- Running sensitisation sessions to prevent secondary victimisation at public health facilities.
- They are creating awareness amongst Community Health Workers, as a key point of contact with communities. This will include information on the basket of services available for survivors of GBV and how to get a protection order.
- And they are ensuring the prioritisation of Emergency Service responses to GBV incidents, when flagged within the Communications Centre.

Speaker,

The Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport will also do its bit.

- They are developing an "understanding of gender-based violence" book collection at Western Cape libraries.
- They are also capacitating women and girls to participate in sport and recreational events, as well as anti-GBV interventions by sporting federations.

I want to give a special shout out to the Ikasi Soccer School Organisation based in Khayelitsha, and specifically its director, Dumisani Ntsodo, who joins me as my special guest today.

His organisation is providing a safe space for girls in this community, through focussing on opportunities in football. He has developed a network, which includes businesses in the area, so there is an all-of-society response to the development of the girl child. Thank you, Dumisani.

Speaker,

As part of this GBV implementation plan:

- All departments will undertake capacity building and sensitisation with respect to GBV, so that there is awareness within the organisation.
- All departments will be required to strengthen and support existing interventions which support women.
- And all departments will be required to constantly monitor and evaluate this GBV implementation plan, with monthly feedback meetings instituted.

We are fully committed to implementing this plan and will constantly review it so that it is improved. But fighting the scourge of GBV cannot be the responsibility of the government alone. The pervasive nature of this violence means that every single organisation, be it private or public, needs its own GBV implementation plan.

Our commitment to the well-being of the people of the Western Cape

Speaker,

Building a prosperous and safe Western Cape where every person has dignity also requires that we focus on the well-being of our residents.

From the moment you are born, until the moment you die, you deserve to live with dignity, with the opportunity to learn and develop so that you can access a job, and live a long, healthy and fulfilling life.

Our core mandate departments of Education, Health and Social Development, which are also our biggest departments, are important vehicles for ensuring this happens.

I would like to spend a little bit of time on each, to set out how we also plan to rethink, focus and innovate in these departments to push back against going back to normal, and push forward to do even better.

We will focus on recovering lost learning time

For Education, I firstly want to reflect on the truly remarkable 2021 NSC Results in our province.

It really gives me great joy to share these statistics with you, especially if you consider the challenges that our learners, parents and teachers faced over the last two years.

I can say with confidence that we continue to deliver a quality-based public education system in the Western Cape.

The results speak for themselves:

- Our provincial pass rate improved to 81.2% - an increase of 1.3 percentage points from last year.
- Our retention rate from Grade 10 to 12 - one of the most important education measures – has increased by 3.7 percentage points to 70.3% - our highest ever!
- We achieved our highest ever percentage of Bachelor passes, at 45.3% - also the highest in the country.
- We achieved the highest percentage of distinctions in South Africa.
- In Mathematics, our province's pass rate increased to 72.4% (an increase of 1.6 percentage points) and in Science, it increased to 77.1% (an increase of 2.2 percentage points).

- And the number of underperforming schools achieving a pass rate of less than 60% has decreased this year, from 52 in 2020 to just 40 in 2021.

I want to thank our learners, parents, teachers, school officials, and of course, our own department, for never giving up. Well done.

Speaker,

While these successes deserve all of our praise, we know that the last two years were incredibly difficult for our education system.

Disruptions to learning caused by lockdowns and rotational timetables meant that valuable time in class was lost for many learners.

This hurts especially poorer communities that do not have the same technology and resources to catch-up, and there is clear evidence to suggest that it increases drop-out rates in these communities.

That is why, as we plan to push back against going back to normal, and push forward, to do even better, we need to ensure that we focus on a recovery in our education system.

The first important step towards achieving this was a return to full-time schooling and an end to rotational timetables. We called for this to happen, and we fully supported the decision to end it when it was announced.

Now that our learners are back in class, we need to make sure that every hour spent has the greatest impact possible.

To achieve this recovery:

- Our department has been working with the national Department of Basic Education to concentrate the curriculum into the critical skills our learners need to succeed in further grades.
- Because we also know that literacy and numeracy in the early grades is foundational, we will be focussing on implementing our Reading Strategy, which has already been launched, as well as launching a new Mathematics strategy.
- We will expand learning opportunities in STEAMAC subjects, so that our learners have the skills they need to access opportunities when they leave their school.
- We will leverage lessons learnt from the pandemic to strengthen eLearning, so that more learners in the Western Cape can access new resources. We have invested over R1.6 billion in e-Learning over the last 5 years already.
- We will leverage technology, with 1290 schools now having broadband connectivity, 1316 with computer labs, and 9 992 smart classrooms, with 1162 additional smart classrooms across 160 schools added in 2021/22.

- We will continue to adopt a pro-poor budgeting approach, through fee-exemption support to learners in disadvantaged communities to attend fee-paying schools.
- We will continue with our focus on quality education through school oversight and accountability. The Schools Evaluation Authority, which has already completed 111 evaluations, will continue to provide this function.
- And we will also focus on providing additional psycho-social support in schools, given the impact of COVID-19 on the mental well-being of learners.

We are also currently overseeing the Early Childhood Development function shift from the Department of Social Development to our Department of Education, and as I announced in my SOPA last year, we successfully hosted our ECD Summit last October. We will continue to build on the partnerships we have created in this vital sector, including providing updated information on this shift as it takes place.

Speaker, because our goal is very simple:

We want to achieve quality education for every child, in every classroom, in every school in the province, so that our children can get onto the ladder of opportunity, so that they can beat poverty, and so that they can live happy and fulfilling lives.

We will focus on recovering our comprehensive health services in the Western Cape

Speaker,

Our health department has demonstrated exactly what we mean when we say we need to rethink, focus and innovate to push back against going back to normal, and push forward to do even better.

They have led from the front over the last two years to deliver, undoubtedly, the most innovative, comprehensive, corruption-free COVID-19 response in South Africa.

They were, again, also the only health department in the country to receive a clean audit - their third in a row!

I would like to thank them, and all our employees in the public health system, for their heroic role over the last four waves to save the lives of the people we love.

While COVID-19 is not the same threat it was to us this time last year, it definitely has not gone away. We must learn to live with the virus, by normalising our response as a country. I will continue to argue strongly for this to happen.

But, we must also remain prepared to respond at all times, while continuing to roll-out life-saving vaccines to all those who want to get vaccinated.

This is not only a health requirement, but necessary for our economy and its future recovery.

To ensure this is the case, we will continue with our targeted COVID-19 vaccination programme, with a special focus on residents over 50, in those districts which have lower vaccination rates. We will continue to be led by science and data in our response.

We will also ensure the successful roll-out of our booster vaccination programme, as more residents become eligible.

Speaker,

As we move forward, we need to look beyond COVID-19 and recover from the very serious impact that it had on the health system overall.

Every time our hospitals came under pressure during a peak of a wave, we had to deescalate non-emergency procedures to create acute care capacity. This has caused a significant backlog.

We have also seen a noticeable increase in mental health patients reporting to our facilities, as a consequence of the economic downturn in our country.

To get back to a full comprehensive health service offering:

- We intend to not de-escalate important services for COVID-19 again.
- We will invest additional resources to ensure a catch-up in surgeries.
- We will use new technology, such as the da Vinci Xi fourth generation robot at Groote Schuur and Tygerberg Hospitals for minimally invasive surgery, to help reduce the backlog.
- We will invest in our mental health facilities to ensure they have the capacity to respond to the increased demand.
- We will expand our telehealth call centre services to include TB contact tracing, and increase our awareness campaigns to ensure improved TB testing rates.
- And we will focus on our policy approach of leveraging private-public partnerships for the achievement of Universal Healthcare Coverage, and we will explore a pilot project to showcase how it works.

Because, Speaker, every person in our province deserves the dignity of healthcare, no matter who they are, no matter where they live, and no matter what they earn.

We will focus on supporting the vulnerable with improved social services, using an all-of-society approach

Speaker,

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the livelihoods of many residents in the Western Cape has been severe.

We have, as a result, seen an increase in many social challenges in our communities, with an increase in hunger, homelessness, mental health related illness, and substance abuse.

It remains the priority of this government to treat the vulnerable and those in need with the care that they deserve, providing them with opportunities to improve their lives, and get onto a new pathway that leads to good health and success.

But, while doing so, we must also be honest that the challenges in our society are too big for us, as a government, to solve alone. We truly need an all-of-society approach and we are fully committed to working with partners in civil society, the private sector, and indeed national and local government, to find lasting solutions.

We will nevertheless play our part, wherever we can, with the resources that we have at our disposal.

- That is why we plan to fund a new homeless shelter in the Cape Town CBD, at the former Robbie Nurock Clinic, which will provide support to an additional 120 homeless adults.
- This is in addition to increasing the number of homeless shelter beds to 2500 by March this year.
- We will also provide funding for the operation of a new safe space in Drakenstein, in partnership with the municipality.
- And we have ensured that funded shelters provide psycho-social support and reunification services.

Speaker,

Our children are the most precious members of our society. Unfortunately, some are exposed to crime, violence and other social ills which impact them adversely. We need to ensure that those children at risk are supported and steered in the right direction.

- That is why we will focus on strengthening the Probation Case Management electronic system for children in conflict with the law, which was piloted in the Metro.
- Once fully implemented, it will constitute a fully electronic case management system, replacing paper-based processes, and enable work to be done from home visits, at courts, and during visits to prisons.
- This rollout is at 70% completion, with tablets being provided to all our Probation Officers.
- This system will also link through to the SAPS, and by the end of the year, we will receive a notification once a child has been arrested via this new digital system, enabling interventions by our teams.
- In addition, Child Protection Services will be included as part of our Area Based Teams, in line with the Provincial Safety Plan. This includes funding for a variety of children support services.

I am also pleased to note, that despite the very serious fiscal challenges we have faced, funds will be reallocated to the 2022/23 financial year to enable the strengthening of the Office of the Children's Commissioner, so that she has more resources to fulfil her important constitutional mandate.

I would like to thank Commissioner Christina Nomdo for her steadfast commitment to our province's children.

The values of the Western Cape Government will remain our shining light

Speaker,

As we look to take the bold steps that are required to push back against going back to normal and push forward to do even better, we need to be reminded that change always needs to be rooted in values.

These values shape who we are, what we stand for, and of course, how we will go about ensuring the delivery of these new and important projects.

That is why I would also like to use this opportunity to commit myself, my cabinet, and all our employees, to the values of our government, which remain our guiding light.

Please let me repeat them today, as our commitment to you, our residents, but also to each of you in this hall - who have an important responsibility of holding me and my government to account.

- Our government must firstly be caring, treating all our residents with respect.
- Our government must be competent, by always striving for excellence, and by doing the job that we were elected to do.
- Our government must be innovative, by seeking to implement new ideas, and to improve on the services that we offer our residents.
- Our government must be responsive, by focusing on you, and by being accessible while listening to your concerns.
- Our government must be accountable, by delivering as we promised to do, and taking ownership when we need to do better.
- And lastly, we must always act with integrity, by creating an ethical environment through being honest and showing respect, with a zero-tolerance for corruption.

This is my commitment, and it is the commitment I will hold each and every member of my cabinet to.

We will inculcate a culture of listening more

Speaker,

These values must never be relegated to the laminated poster in your office, referenced only when times are tough.

We must live our values every single day. Values lived is culture and I have been told many times, as Peter Drucker famously said, that "culture eats strategy for breakfast."

If we are to push forward, we need to obsess about the culture of the Western Cape Government.

We might have all the best plans, guided by the right values, but if our over 80 000 strong staff complement are not inspired to do what it takes to make a difference in the communities we serve, then we will not achieve these very important objectives.

Every day, in my job, I get to meet the most remarkable employees. Be it teachers, healthcare workers, engineers or traffic officers, I really do get to see the most inspiring passion in their eyes each and every day.

I especially saw it during the COVID-19 pandemic, when heroes and heroines stood up amongst us, to fight for the well-being of our families, friends, neighbours, and colleagues.

The thing that bound them in the darkest of days, was a drive to save lives and livelihoods. They didn't restrict themselves to long meetings and agendas – they made quick decisions, were brave enough to fail and learn and then try another way.

My question to our government is how can we help you keep this passion going throughout the year? How can we inspire you to push back against going back to normal, and push forward, to do more?

These are key questions we have been discussing as a provincial cabinet and senior management team. While this is definitely a journey that will require much more attention and focus by our Director General, we have agreed on some important immediate steps.

Firstly, we must always be a government that speaks less, and listens to you more. That is why, going forward, we will make it a permanent feature for our cabinet and our senior management team to spend less time deliberating amongst ourselves and to go out and work in communities. Let me be clear here: not speak to the communities, but to listen to them.

This will not be a campaign, or an event. It will be a new way of working in the Western Cape Government, built into the systems and processes of our government, and I will personally oversee it happening.

To facilitate this we will look to reduce meeting lengths in the Western Cape Government by 50%. If you do not need to meet, send an email.

Government officials spend too much of their time in meetings and not enough time to think of new ideas and actually get to the work they need. This prevents innovation, as well as time being spent out listening to communities.

Lastly, we will benchmark ourselves against the best in the private sector as one of the best places to work. It might be that we currently finish low when compared to the Googles of the world, but we will take the plunge and offer ourselves up for assessment and critique so we can start making the changes, team by team, that will allow us to attract the best talent in the Western Cape and South Africa.

Conclusion

Because, Speaker,

We cannot go back to the way things were before.

We have to push back against going back to normal, and we have to push forward, so that we do even better.

Our residents expect nothing less from us.

Families and small business owners are having to make tough choices each and every day. They have had to change the way they go about their lives.

Governments should be expected to do the same. And we will do the same.

Because the moment that presents itself is too important to let pass by. We have to use it, with courage and determination.

We have to, like the fishing communities right here in Velddrif and the WesKus, get up, get out, and "set sail" again.

Speaker,

While the challenges that face our province are serious and, at times, can seem overwhelming, we must never forget what a truly special place we live in. We have everything we need to succeed.

We have the best public healthcare system in South Africa.

We have a well-run, quality public education system.

We have the best universities in the country.

We have the best-run local governments located here in the province.

We have modern infrastructure and good roads.

We have natural resources.

We have so much natural beauty.

We are a place of innovation and entrepreneurship, attracting people from all over the country, the continent and the world.

And most of all, we have the most inspiring people - driven by hope and a search for opportunity, with a shared determination to build a better life for their children.

This gives me hope, and it should give you hope too.

We now need to do everything we can to deliver the jobs and the safety that every person in our province deserves.

We have all the ingredients to make this work.

And we will not stop trying.

We will rethink, we will focus and we will innovate.

We will try new ideas, and if they fail, we will get up, and we will try again.

And we will keep on finding new ways to be the government that you deserve, so you can live a long and happy life.