

Budget Speech:

Department of the Premier- 2021/22

Delivered: 29 March 2021

Check against delivery.

Honorable speaker, honorable members

As a Department, our vision is to “enable and lead a capable Western Cape Government by institutionalizing a culture of innovation and collaboration.” Over the past year of lockdown, this government, under the leadership of this Department, has worked more innovatively and collaboratively than ever before.

The Department of the Premier is the engine room of this government. It has led our Covid-19 response and our recovery interventions, providing the leadership, support, strategy and data that our departments rely on to get to work in service of the people of this province.

Speaker, to do this, the Department of the Premier has been allocated a budget of R1.748 billion in the 2021/22 financial year.

Last month, when I delivered my State of the Province Address in Genadendal, I detailed how the Western Cape Government is leading from the front to deliver in the areas of jobs, safety, dignity and wellbeing, and in our Covid-19 response.

In the year ahead, we will harness innovation and collaboration even further, to become leaner, smarter and even more agile and responsive.

Examples of this include:

-Providing policy support to the ECD sector, which this government has identified as an essential service that we must support, to ensure the smooth transition from the Department of Social Development, to the Department of Education.

-We will also conduct a scoping exercise to understand the behaviours affecting early childhood development outcomes in the Western Cape, using behaviour change techniques focusing on parents, learners, centre managers and teachers, and partnering with global and local experts. We have earmarked R1.5 million in funding for this purpose.

-We are currently rolling out a similar partnership between the WCED, institutions of higher learning and international partners to conduct a needs assessment at 10 schools in Cape Town to assess perceptions of violence in schools. This will allow us to see how learners and others in the school community experience and

perceive violence. The results will be used to design a pilot study to test the efficacy of violence prevention techniques which we can scale up, if positive results are found.

When I announced the safety plan, I said that it would be data driven and evidence led. And I said that it would put boots on the ground and look at violence prevention. This will be just one of the ways that we are putting this into action.

Speaker, in June last year, we appointed our first ever Children's Commissioner in the Western Cape. Despite the difficulties she has faced getting out into communities, Ms Christina Nomdo has taken enormous strides, with support from this department.

A fierce advocate for making children's voices heard, she set about recruiting children to become Child Government Monitors. Since coming into office, she has recruited 45 monitors, with 42 currently still working with her. The group includes children with disabilities, from the LGBTQI community, and children who live in care homes.

This group has advised her for submissions to the United Nations, and on the Children's Act. They have made submissions on the reopening of schools during the pandemic, and matrices in the group launched a campaign to make their voices heard to cancel the rewrite. They have also made submissions to her on topics including sex education and mental health in schools.

In what must be a government first, Ms Nomdo has also allowed children to be part of the interview processes to appoint staff for her office, and they were instrumental in helping develop her brand, and have lived up to her office's slogan "Little Voice Must Count."

In the 2021/22 year, the Children's Commissioner has an earmarked allocation of R9.8 million to continue this important work.

The Commissioner has also just recently launched her new website and I encourage everyone who has not yet gone to have a look, to do so.
(www.westerncape.gov.za/childrens-commissioner/)

Speaker, this Department has also been tasked with leading on VIP 5- innovation and culture, so that the people of this province feel that they are our priority.

This department has budgeted R18,1 million for innovative initiatives in 2021/22. As part of these plans, we have allocated R3 million in this year, and an additional R4 million in the outer years, for the transformation of the Provincial Training Institute at Kromme Rhee into an innovation and learning hub. This hub will allow

us to use new methodologies and technologies for skilling and training, and help us come up with innovative solutions to service delivery.

Speaker, effective service delivery requires every single person in this government to share our values of competence, accountability, integrity, responsiveness and caring. It requires that we identify talent, and develop our staff. It requires us to nurture and mature our leadership capabilities. We have allocated R4.2 million to these culture change interventions in the current year, and we will be including engagement and feedback mechanism for citizens and employees so that we can monitor and track the progress of these interventions.

To be truly citizen-centric, we must become a leaner, smarter and more agile government. The Department of the Premier will be taking the lead on this, developing a New Way of Work, which focuses on intergovernmental collaboration, and encouraging the kinds of exciting innovation which we put in place in our response to the pandemic, in all areas of our government.

Speaker, one of the key services this department delivers to the public is the rollout of broadband and wifi. Over the past year, we have seen the importance of being digitally connected. Whether it was a patient who was able to video call their loved ones from one of our temporary Covid hospitals, learners using the internet to continue learning, or job seekers connecting to opportunities, access to broadband and wifi, has helped us to stay connected at a time when we couldn't be connected in person.

We have also been able to use technology and our call centre to deliver life-saving information and interventions to the people of this province.

As part of our digital ecosystem, we operate 47 Cape Access Centres, 1045 public wifi hotspots, 1911 broadband sites of which the majority are over 100 Megabits per second or higher, 13 citizen contact channels and the Western Cape portal.

For the year ahead, earmarked allocations of R375 million and R30 million have been made for the broadband rollout, and wifi hotspots respectively.

Over the last year, we have seen our contact centre adapt and change and become involved in our humanitarian response as well as assisting in our contact tracing and telemedicine efforts. In the year ahead, this vital service will continue to play an important role in the 3rd wave, and in the vaccine rollout.

Speaker, I want to take a moment now to talk about the third wave and the vaccine rollout. The Western Cape Government's response to Covid-19 has always been based on using the best available data to us to make decisions,

and sharing that information with the public so that we bring about behaviour change.

Even with all of the data available to us, we cannot pinpoint exactly when our third wave will come, where it will be or its severity. We do know that we are unlikely to have sufficient vaccines to achieve immunity in the country by then. Vaccines are safe and they are our ticket to economic recovery but our behaviour now and in the months to come is the most important tool in our toolbox right now to minimize the severity of a third wave, and to save lives.

Over the past year, the Western Cape Government rolled out the biggest communications campaign on record for this government to ensure that people have the information they need to stay safe and to protect themselves.

In the year ahead, we have allocated R20 million in funding to continue this campaign and to provide information about the safety, efficacy and the rollout of vaccines in the province.

Speaker, for our vaccination campaign to be truly effective, enough people must get vaccinated to achieve herd immunity.

We know that there is still a lot of hesitancy around vaccines which is made worse by large amounts of irresponsible fake news.

In countries around the world, communications and social mobilization are key components of this vaccine rollout.

The Western Cape Government is committed to sharing factual, science-based information with our residents so that they can make informed choices when their turn to be vaccinated comes around.

Just like we have done throughout this pandemic.

As I close off, I want to thank residents and all of our partners who have worked with us over the past year in fighting this pandemic. I also want to appeal to everyone to be safe as a number of religious holidays and school holidays approach. We cannot give up this fight just yet and we must all behave responsibly by wearing our masks, washing our hands, and avoiding crowds, confined spaces and close contact.

Finally, I want to thank the DG, everyone in the Department of the Premier and each and every public servant who has gone above and beyond the call of duty of the past year, and who, in the year ahead, will continue to help us deliver to the people of this province.

