

# EASTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE

HON. JANE COWLEY, MPL



B. Sc.(Stellenbosch) HED (UNISA)  
M. Ed (Mathematics) (Rhodes)  
Shadow MEC Health  
Deputy Shadow MEC DEDEAT  
Portfolio Committee in Finance  
Chairperson: Provincial Fundraising Committee



Cell phone: 072 903 5038

Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature  
Bhisho

E-mail: fishwifec@gmail.com  
jcowley@ecleg.co.za

25 June 2019

Attention: The MEC for Health

Dear Hon. Gomba

**RE: State of Mthatha Medical Depot and proposed Rural Patient Transfer system**

During a recent oversight at the Butterworth Hospital and rural clinics in the Mbashe municipal area, it became apparent that many patients are being referred by clinics to the Butterworth Hospital to collect medication that they should be receiving at the clinics.

This is because these clinics do not have the required medication in stock as the Mthatha Medical Depot has failed to dispatch the medications to them.

The continued failure of the Mthatha Medical Depot to fulfil its function of supplying necessary pharmaceuticals to district hospitals and clinics has been blamed on renovations that are still underway at the depot.

In response to questions last year, we were assured that the depot would be completed and fully functional by February this year. This is clearly not the case.

This is a shame as the renovations have been underway for a ridiculously long period of time. There was little or no planning as to how the depot would continue to function whilst under partial construction and renovation. This is a clear management failure. As a result, clinics and hospitals that depend upon the depot have had to suffer shortages, and in many cases, have had to travel vast distances collect medication from the PE depot.

I would be grateful if you could please provide clear timelines as to when we can expect the depot to be fully functional.

I would be further grateful if you could furnish me with the qualifications of the upper managers at the facility as I wish to establish whether they are adequately qualified for the job.

The oversight further revealed that many rural patients, who are ill and do not have the financial means to travel, are having to secure their own transport to the Butterworth Hospital, in order to make use of the patient transfer transport to other hospitals such as Frere or Cecilia Makiwane Hospital in East London.

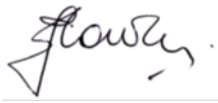
These patients often make use of taxis, but arrive too late for the patient transport, and as a result end up sleeping in the hospital waiting area. As they do not have the necessary funds to take the taxi back home and return the following day.

---

I would humbly suggest that a Rural Patient Transfer System be initiated such as the one in the Western Cape, which currently services 150 000 patients per annum. This brings these rural patients huge financial relief.

I look forward to your response.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Cowley', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Jane Cowley MPL