

EASTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE

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Attention: The Director: South African Human Rights Commission

Dr Eileen Carter: Provincial Manager

Re: The use of Komani Psychiatric Hospital wards by Enoch Mgijima municipal officials

I write to you to express my grave concern that no less than three thirty-bedded wards at the Komani Psychiatric Hospital outside eKomani in the Eastern Cape are being used by municipal officials as office space. I discovered this on a recent oversight visit to the facility and the situation has allegedly been ongoing for two years or more.

In light of the fact that our province is in the midst of a full-blown and escalating mental health crisis, where hospitals across the province are inundated with mental health patients seeking specialised care, the fact that wards that collectively can accommodate ninety beds have been sacrificed for administrative use for local government officials is outrageous and completely unacceptable.

Of even graver concern is that the Komani Hospital offers forensic services, which means that many of the patients that are currently admitted in the nearby Frontier Hospital and are waiting to be admitted to Komani Hospital, are classified as criminally insane and the clinical staff there are not qualified to treat them effectively.

I firmly believe that the rights of these patients are being violated in the worst possible way. It cannot be that office space for municipal officials, who have access to any facility with available space, can trump the critical need of psychiatric patients to access the specialised care that they need. No explanation can justify this violation and I would be most grateful if you and your team would consider investigating the matter.

I look forward to hearing from you in this regard.

Yours faithfully,

Jane Cowley

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