MEDIA STATEMENT

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Premier Panyaza Lesufi fully accepts the judgement on the Life Esidimeni inquest

The Gauteng Provincial Government fully accepts the judgement on the Life Esidimeni inquest handed down by the High Court in Pretoria earlier today. The inquest, which was established in July 2021, sought to investigate the criminal liability for the deaths of 141 mental healthcare users from Life Esidimeni.

“We are pleased this process that brought so much pain and suffering to those who lost their loved ones, as well as the survivors whose human rights were grossly violated by this tragedy is nearing its end. This judgement closes a painful chapter, not only for the affected families but for us as the Gauteng Provincial Government”, said Premier Lesufi.

The judgement follows an arbitration process led by retired Deputy Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke that was established in 2018 and culminated in an arbitration award for the victims of the tragedy. In the award, Justice Moseneke gave the provincial government a list of 134 people who had to be paid following the arbitration process. All claimants were paid (R159 million, 460 thousand) in full within the time that was stipulated by Justice Moseneke in his report.

The only payments that are still outstanding are for the survivors who were not part of the initial arbitration process. The provincial government is currently administering these claims. However, upon successful verification, the claimants will only receive 50% of the claims. The other 50% will be held in trust on behalf of the mental healthcare user, which is in line with the Mental Healthcare Act 17 of 2002.

“As the Gauteng Provincial Government, we are confident that the National Prosecuting Authority will take this judgement forward and we await the conclusion of this matter”, said Premier Lesufi.
Lesufi added that following the Life Esidimeni tragedy the provincial government has made concerted efforts to ensure that the rights of mental healthcare users are promoted and always safeguarded.

“As part of ongoing measures to strengthen mental health care in Gauteng, the provincial government undertook to ensure that the 5 district Mental Review Boards (MHRBs) are functional and effective.

“The MHRBs are made up of 27 individuals with diverse expertise which include legal practitioners (attorneys and advocates), mental health care practitioners (doctors, psychiatric nurses, psychologists, and social workers) and community members with a proven record of community development and involvement”, said Premier Lesufi.

In response to the growing need for mental health services, the provincial government has prioritised the refurbishments and repurposing of some of its healthcare facilities to improve mental healthcare infrastructure and services across the province.

To date, several facilities have already been refurbished and opened to ensure enough acute mental health beds in hospitals and to increase mental health resources, including specialized professionals and rehabilitation services.

These facilities include Bertha Gxowa, South Rand, Tshwane District, Tembisa, Edenvale, Dr George Mukhari and Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospitals.

The newly opened Kopanong Gateway Specialised Mental Health Day clinic offers a basket of free services for mental health patients ranging from counselling, social work services, dual diagnosis services (serious mental illness and substance use disorders) as well as psychotherapy for adults, children, and adolescents.

“The provincial government sympathise with the bereaved and affected families and understands that the Life Esidimeni inquest was incredibly important for families to find closure and for accountability”, said Premier Lesufi.

Issued by the Gauteng Provincial Government

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