

# *‘Mental hospital far from being operational...’*

## **STAFF REPORTER**

THE NEW mental health hospital in Kimberley is far from becoming operational. This was the view of the DA who paid an oversight visit to the hospital.

DA provincial leader Andrew Louw said that the R2 billion facility, which has taken almost fifteen years to complete, is still a long way off from becoming operational.

He said that while Premier Sylvia Lucas bragged about the facility’s eventual completion during her State of the Province address (Sopa) and, in her reply to the Sopa debates, announced the appointment of a number of personnel for the facility, including around 25 nurses and five medical officers that were due to commence work on Friday, but these new appointees were nowhere to be seen.

He added that the Department of Health wasn’t expected to get the facility up and running any time soon, pointing out that “they had the better part of 10 years to make the necessary preparations for a smooth transition from the West End Hospital to the new building”.

Louw said that it has already been exactly a year since the MEC for Roads and Public Works, Mxolisi Sokatsha, stated that all work at the hospital was 100% done and that the project was on a snagging and de-snagging phase to rectify any faults. At the time, it was further said that the facility would be operational by July 2018.

Louw stated that the real reason why the facility has not yet been operationalised is because the Department of Health ran out of money, not once, but numerous times.

“They also used the funds that were intended for operationalisation of this facility on legal costs and construction to repair work done by past tenderpreneur contractors.

“Another reason behind the delays in the facility’s operationalisation has been the outstanding rates and taxes, to the value of approximately R100 million, owed by the Department of Roads and Public Works to Sol Plaatje Municipality in respect of the hospital.

“It is uncertain as to whether this dispute has ever been settled. If the Health Department got the occupancy certificate, it must have been paid – but with what money?