



**PAINTING: Department of health MEC Sindiswa Gomba gets to work at the Komani Hospital on Friday** Picture: ABONGILE SOLUNDWANA

# Facelift starts for Komani Hospital wards

**ABONGILE SOLUNDWANA**

The renovation of 12 wards which were dilapidated at Komani Hospital has begun.

Department of health MEC Sindiswa Gomba rolled up her sleeves on Friday to address the long-overdue revamp of the hospital, which Nehawu had been calling for. The hospital has 17 wards, of which only five are in good condition.

This reaction came after the MEC had to put out fires two weeks ago, following a Nehawu strike when employees demanded that their needs be addressed by top provincial officials.

The demands included the badly deteriorating state of the buildings. The renovations are conducted by the department of public works.

The Rep reported, "Health MEC outlines plans to set Komani Hospital in order", August 30.

The MEC said, "I had received a number of complaints from workers on my last visit about the bad condition of the hospital wards which neglected the needs of patients.

"I also noticed the court area where the patients spend time relaxing is literary ground. There is not even grass."

As a result, Gomba is planning to have artificial grass and tiles fitted to give the place a facelift.

"I learnt that the patients' clothes are changed twice a week unless they have soiled the clothing.

"They should be changed every day. It does not mean that if people have a psychiatric condition they should be treated in an undignified manner and left unclean," she said.

"Some of the patients should have been discharged sooner, but if they are placed in an environment that does not support their recovery process they will take longer than expected.

"The environment negates the therapeutic aspect of the institution which makes patients regress easily."

The other challenge facing hospital staff and patients was water connection.

Gomba said, "We are discussing having a borehole or another form of connection which will possibly take longer to implement."

The hospital had three boreholes which were not operating at present, she said.

She was also not happy with the state of the floors, which had paint coming off after being refurbished fairly recently. She did not understand why the kitchen and toilets were not repaired and the walls painted when the floor was revamped.

"However, the bigger has been the neglect of taking responsibility. The management of Komani Hospital enjoys their offices rather than putting effort into work and conducting inspections. There is still a culture of playing the blame game."

Gomba said the mental health and service must be prioritised. "The Eastern Cape recently had the health ombudsman here to assess the condition of hospitals and the report hit hard on department of health officials.

The MEC added that the report condemned a number of conditions including the bad state of psychiatric hospitals. "We are looking for ways to address the report. At present an administrator has been deployed by the national ministry of health to assess the progress made in psychiatric hospitals and to oversee the implementation of recommendations in the report," she said.

Nehawu's regional chairman, Mahlubi Ralane, said: "We are happy that the MEC is taking charge. It is the first time someone has responded to us with urgency. It is the union's responsibility to oversee the progress of the renovations."

Ralane said the situation was calm among workers, that the MEC had instilled hope in the employees and that new staff had begun work.

"I am glad the MEC saw the problems. This is why we want an audit to be conducted on the money allocated because people employ their friends to do the projects.

"We want an occupational therapy area for patients because they do not have anything to keep them busy. We want them to be empowered.

"Before they used to do woodwork and mend shoes. Patients used to garden and work at the car wash, which were affected by water issues," he said.