

# No date for hospital opening

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WHILE the new MEC for Health, Mase Monnapule, has promised that the Kimberley mental health hospital will be opened this month, a specific date as to when the facility will open its doors has not been provided yet, with only two weeks to go before the end of September.

The spokesperson for the MEC for Health, Lebogang Majaha, stated yesterday that the facility would still be opened this month, at a date to be announced.

The area has apparently been cleaned and the grass cut, while it is believed that the contractors are preparing to hand over the site in due course.

Contractors and sub-contract-



ors who are still owed outstanding payments stated that they sincerely hoped that the project would be finalised by the end of the month. "After being 10 years on site, it has been a colossal nightmare fighting for payment."

Both the MEC for Health and Premier Zamani Saul made announcements that the 286-bed facility would be up and running to accommodate patients in September.

However, it appears as if specialised psychiatric medical staff must still be sourced, while no beds, equipment, furniture, computers, stationery, medical supplies, linen, or the provision of security seems to have been procured yet, where in-house security is still guarding the site.

Patient systems also still need to be set up.

The initial projected staff complement was four psychiatrists, seven psychologists, six pharmacists, four medical officers, 17 operational managers, including a CEO and assistant manager of

nursing and six assistant nursing directors, 113 professional nurses, 24 enrolled nurses, one general manager, 56 enrolled nursing assistants, 52 clerks, 225 cleaners, seven occupational therapists, five physiotherapists, six social workers and one dietitian.

The Department of Health has yet to indicate whether it has received any additional funds from Treasury towards its daily running costs and ongoing maintenance of the project.

About R2 billion was spent on the construction of the building since 2006. Three contractors changed hands on site, including Vista Park Developers/Joh Arch Investment, Nyatsi Construction and Mota-Engil Construction South Africa.

It was estimated that salaries alone would cost the Department of Health at least R94 million per annum.

Another factor for the delays in the operationalisation of the facility, is the outstanding rates on the facility amounting to over

R100 million that is owed by the Department of Roads and Public Works to Sol Plaatje Municipality.

During her budget speech Monnapule said a media and stakeholder tour would be conducted at the facility prior to its official opening.

"The new hospital will initially open with 160 beds, comprising of 46 state patient beds, 93 involuntary patient beds and 21 voluntary and assisted patient beds. The department is exploring opportunities to open 10 beds for forensic observations and 10 beds for child and adolescent mental health services. The department is currently finalising the installation of equipment and furniture to be ready for the opening."

She stated that mental health patients from West End Hospital would be transferred to the new facility this month.

The Department of Health was allocated a total budget of R5.1 billion for the 2019/20 financial year.

Monnapule explained that the budget for payments of capital

assets decreased by 14.7 percent compared to the R376 million in the adjusted budget in 2018/19.

She indicated that this was due to reprioritisation within the Health Facility Revitalisation Grant to scale down on the capital allocation for construction of new facilities and prioritise the repair and maintenance of the existing health facilities

DA provincial leader Andrew Louw is meanwhile not convinced that the facility will be up and running before the end of the year.

He earlier this year pointed out that the R47 million was allocated from the Health Facilities Management Grant for the new mental health hospital in 2019/20 for "construction" while R15 million was allocated for repair and maintenance for the 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial years from the Health Facility Revitalisation Grant.

He added that more funding would inevitably have to be sourced to keep the doors of the hospital open in the future.

"Only R5.5 million was made available for the start-up costs for the operationalisation of the new Kimberley mental health hospital in this financial year.

"What was supposed to be a state-of-the-art, first-of-its-kind facility has become outdated before it has even opened its doors.

"People in the districts are still without any mental health care services. State patients languish in prison because of a lack of beds at the old West End Hospital and mental health patients at Robert Sobukwe Hospital in Kimberley are kept in mixed gender wards."