

MEC Dhlomo urges unemployed nurses not to lose hope, as recruitment drive attracts 8000 applicants for 300 enrolled nursing posts

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KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has urged unemployed nurses to persevere and not lose hope due to the limited number of posts currently available in the province. The MEC also strongly criticized the province's 28 private nursing colleges who train students at exorbitant cost, without considering whether there are enough posts in the public and private healthcare sectors in which to place them.

MEC Dhlomo was speaking in Durban today during an exercise to recruit 150 enrolled nurses and 150 enrolled nursing assistants. This is part of a stimulus package which was first announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa earlier this year and, more recently by health minister Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, to boost the health sector through the creation of more than 5 300 jobs throughout the country.

An estimated 8000 people showed up on the sports fields outside Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital in Cato Manor today, to be examined for their suitability for the 300 posts. Some arrived yesterday and slept overnight, while others made their way early this morning. Coming from districts throughout the province, they formed long snaking queues that stretched hundreds of metres away from the sports fields. The Department's security and emergency services personnel had their hands full managing the crowds and directing the candidates in what was a largely incident-free operation. They rose to the occasion in spectacular fashion.

Commenting on the day's proceedings, MEC Dhlomo thanked all those who made the day a success, but expressed his sadness at the large number of job-seekers. *"It is sad when you look at the numbers of unemployed people who've been trained, largely by the private nursing colleges in the province, going over 10 000. When we engaged these private nursing colleges, I asked them 'what plan do you have? Why do you keep on training people when there's no plan to get them into the system?' All these people have remained unknown to the Department. We went even further to decrease our intake in hospitals so that we could allow absorption of these nurses. That has not had a significant dent. We even made arrangements to transport them to various other provinces if they need to be seen there, and be interviewed for jobs. Here and there they've been successful, but by and large we still remain with over 10 000 nurses who are unemployed.*



"Today, we assembled them and got them to write a test that will allow us to employ 150 enrolled staff nurses and 150 enrolled nursing assistants. This is thanks to the stimulus package to improve personnel in various hospitals."

Explaining why the recruitment was done centrally, instead of allowing the districts to manage it, MEC Dhlomo said, *"Somebody might criticize us and ask why didn't we do it district by district. We're doing it centrally because we want all of them to be on the job come 01 January 2019. This will allow them to write the tests, which will be overseen by nursing college tutors, who must complete the recruitment process quickly. But it is very sad that we've got 300 posts, but we've received 10 000 applicants. We wish that this can one day improve."*

The MEC nevertheless encouraged nurses who will be unsuccessful not to throw in the towel, saying that more opportunities will arise in future.

"We know there'll be a significant number of people who won't be successful through this process. As the first province that has done this recruitment in this fashion, we hope that our tutors, principals and examiners will then be able to take some of those scripts and share that database with their colleagues in other provinces to consider these nurses for positions. We know other provinces will also need this category of staff nurses. As a province, we will also be having vacancies here and there ... maybe not 300 at one go... but they must place their ear on the ground when we're going to have [other recruitment processes] unfolding. It is sad when you get told that some of these students have spent R40 000 per year on training. For those who studied for two years, it's R80 000, and you have people going as far as loan sharks to borrow money, and at the end of the day they sit at home and wait for no job coming their way. We want

this to come to an end, by exposing the inefficiencies of these private nursing colleges who train people without giving them an opportunity."