

Media release by Premier Winde at his weekly digital press conference 15 July 2021

“The Western Cape is starting to see a slowing down in new COVID-19 cases, but increases in hospitalisations and deaths continue”

During my weekly digital press conference today focussing on the health platform, it was highlighted that although we are beginning to see a slowing down in the week-on-week increase in COVID-19 infections, we need to remain vigilant and monitor the situation.

This follows a 13.5% increase being recorded this week, compared to 29% in the previous week.

Our health platform remains under pressure, with continued increases in hospitalisations and deaths as we approach our peak.

I want to be very clear that we are not out of the woods yet and we must continue to do everything in our power to break the chain of transmission so that we flatten the peak as much as possible. This will protect our healthcare system and save lives.

Our provincial health platform shows us that:

- The reproductive number has decreased to 1.1 from 1.2 last week which means that for every 10 active cases, there are an additional 11 new cases. This ‘R’ number is still above 0, however, which means that we have not yet started to decline.
- Case numbers are continuing to increase, although at a slower rate, and we are currently seeing an average of 2335 new diagnoses each day.
- The proportion of positive COVID-19 tests has remained high at around 32%.
- Admissions are increasing with an average of 280 new admissions per day.
- Deaths have also increased now to approximately 60 deaths per day.

“The Western Cape Government is scaling up its COVID-19 capacity”

We are ensuring we remain prepared for the third wave peak, in line with our clearly identified trigger points.

To do so, we have:

- De-escalated non-COVID services to maintain essential care.
- Progressively demarcated persons under investigation, COVID-19 ward and COVID-19 critical care capacity at our acute hospitals. This will ensure we use the full planned capacity of 2300 public sector COVID-19 beds.

- We are fully commissioning our field hospital capacity in Brackengate (336 beds), Mitchells Plain Hospital of Hope (200 beds), Freesia and Ward 99 (75 beds), WCRC (26 beds), Sonstraal Hospital (68 beds) and rural hospitals.
- Ensuring the coordinated movement of patients from Emergency Centres to acute and critical care beds to field hospital beds, and streamlined discharges.
- Employing additional staff and retaining those from the second wave, with flexible deployment.
- Conducting daily huddles to ensure uninterrupted oxygen supply and distribution, in line with oxygen utilisation needs.

“We have enough bed capacity and can scale up further”

We are continuing to closely monitor the usage of beds across our province, through a centrally coordinated and professional operation, known as the Bed Bureau Management System.

In the Western Cape, the total general bed use rate is at 84%, the total COVID-19 bed use rate is at 50%, and the total designated COVID-19 critical care bed use rate is at 96%.

Insofar as our drainage areas are concerned:

- The Metro has 5029 beds, of which the general bed use rate is 91%, the COVID-19 bed use rate is 51%;
- The George drainage area has 918 beds, of which the general bed use rate is 66%, the COVID-19 bed use rate is 56%;
- The Paarl drainage area has 985 beds, of which the general bed use rate is 75%; the COVID-19 bed use rate is 67%; and
- The Worcester drainage area has 769 beds, of which the general bed use rate is 68%, the COVID-19 bed use rate is 30%.

We have enough oxygen supply in the Western Cape

The Western Cape has enough oxygen supply and there is currently no need to bring on additional oxygen supply. Should we require additional supply, we have an undertaking from Afrox to be able to scale up the provision as required.

Insofar as our oxygen supply is concerned:

- The combined public-private utilisation is now 54.15 tons a day or 77.36% of the maximum production capacity at the Afrox Western Cape plant.
- The public sector total average bulk oxygen consumption is 28.7 tons a day or 40.97 %.

“Western Cape continues to exceed weekly vaccine targets”

As of last week, we again met and exceeded our vaccination targets in the Western Cape. Against a target of 120 000 vaccines, we administered 133 390. In the last 24 hours alone, we vaccinated 30 000 people in the province - this is our highest number vaccinated in 24 hours on record.

Going forward, we will have the capacity to reach a minimum of 150 000 people a week or 30 000 a day, subject to supply.

To date, we have vaccinated 708 258 eligible persons which include those over 60, over 50, healthcare workers (as part of the Sisonke trial) and the education sector. Of these, 199 796 are fully vaccinated.

Throughout our mass vaccination programme, we can bring 289 cumulative sites online which include 82 vaccine sites in the Metro and 207 vaccine sites in rural communities.

To date, a total of 92 private sector sites, including 66 in the Metro and 26 in Rural communities have been brought online.

We are also continuing in our efforts to register and vaccinate those in rural settings through roving teams performing outreaches and visiting satellite clinics.

“The Electronic Vaccine Data System is now open to 35+”

I am excited to see that from today, registrations are open to those in the 35-49 year age bracket and that from 1 August, we will begin to schedule vaccinations for them.

At this stage, I want to encourage those in the 35+ age bracket to wait for their appointment SMSs. This is because we still have many people in the 50+ and 60+ bracket to vaccinate.

Our prioritisation for walk-ins remains the same:

- People who are over 60 years requiring their first dose of the Pfizer vaccine;
- People who are over 60 years requiring their second dose of the Pfizer vaccine; and
- People who are between 50 -59 years requiring their first dose of the Pfizer vaccine.

We remain concerned about the lower registration numbers in poorer communities, but we will continue in our efforts to engage directly with these communities to register and vaccinate them. We are driving this process forward through our mobile and pop-up sites.

“We need to protect ourselves & our loved ones from COVID-19”

I call on residents to do everything in their power to protect themselves and their families from infection and transmission by practising the lifesaving behaviours that we have already learnt over the past 15 months, including:

- Avoiding gatherings and large crowds;
- Wearing your mask correctly by covering both your nose and mouth;
- Washing and sanitising your hands regularly;
- If you must go out, ensure that it is short, small and outside; and
- Ensuring that your airspace is well ventilated, whether indoors or on public transport. You can do this by opening windows and doors, where possible.

The time has come for us to protect our bubbles and our loved ones, and to flatten the curve as we start approaching our peak. This will help save lives, and ensure that we can keep on moving forward.