

The Covid-19 Ad Hoc Committee: The Parliamentary Pulse of the Pandemic

Chairperson, the Covid-19 Ad Hoc Committee was established a little over 2 years ago and served as the parliamentary pulse of the pandemic. The committee produced monthly reports totalling in excess of 500 pages. This final report is the culmination of 2 years of scrutiny over the executive and more broadly, the effect of the pandemic on society in the Western Cape.

This committee, the only one of its kind in South Africa, has been the subject of several academic studies already. It has been an excellent vehicle for a whole of society view of government action, and the effects of this virus. I am very proud to have been part of this committee, as its chairperson, and I am proud of this legislature that it established this body to breathe life into parliamentary oversight at a time where there was uncertainty and fear.

When the committee was established, I doubt any of us thought that our assignment would be as long as 2 years. Two very long years they were. During this time, most of us have gotten Covid, many of us have lost colleagues and loved ones and some continue experiencing lingering symptoms of “long Covid”.

We remember and pray for every person whose life has been taken by this disease, and those that are suffering its aftermath which has changed our world, and impacted every household across our province, South Africa and the world.

As of today, globally, there have been 520 million confirmed cases and 6,3 million deaths.

We looked into everything from provincial oxygen supplies, to bereavement counselling, to the informal economy. We checked that we had sufficient food supply from farms during the lockdown and why the price of eggs increased, to feeding schemes for children, the closure of ECDs centres, the re-opening of schools, the transport of health care workers and the provision of PPE for nurses. The impact on learning, the elderly, and children. It was indeed, the parliamentary pulse of the pandemic.

The executive and top management came week after week to brief the committee so that, as public representatives, we were able to scrutinise the work of the government and ask some of the most important questions.

But we didn't just hear from government. We listened to citizens of this province, and we spoke to survivors of Covid, NGOs, unions, business chambers, and psychologists. 17 000 people participated in our public participation process.

As the chairperson of this committee, I tried my utmost to follow the principles of fairness and to open up spaces for opposition parties. I would like to thank my colleagues on this committee- from both sides of the benches. It was an honour to serve with you.

I am sure I speak on behalf of all members by giving thanks to the procedural officers, Mr Waseem Mathews, Ms Zaheedah Adams, Ms Wasiema Hassen Moosa, Ms Shumeeze Jones and Senior POs Ms Lizette Cloete, Mr Ben Daza and Mr Mario Sassman for their outstanding efforts and hard work, we thank you.

We express our deepest gratitude toward the thousands of healthcare workers, doctors, nurses, government officials and civil society members that worked and

continue to work so hard, to ensure our survival. Thank you to the Premier and the provincial cabinet for steering us through these troubled waters.

Chairperson, I report that the committee has concluded its assignment and ask that the report and its recommendations be adopted.

Thank you.