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Welcome

Honourable Speaker and Deputy Speaker

Honourable Premier and Cabinet Ministers

Honourable Leader of the Opposition

Honourable Leaders of Opposition Parties

Honourable Members of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament

Members of the Consular Corp

Heads of Department

Executive Mayors and Deputy Mayors

Municipal Managers

Special Guests

People of the Western Cape

Die spesiale mense van die Karoo en die beste lam in die wêreld!

Good evening. Molweni. Goeie naand.

I am humbled that Zolani Mahola and Aaron Halevi have chosen to share their powerful call to each of us to *step up*, as I deliver the 2025 State of the Province Address to the people of our remarkable province.

Your message, delivered through the *power of music* resonates with me. Because stepping up is exactly what leadership demands especially in times of uncertainty. In May last year, we all **raised our hands to serve and made that choice**. But leadership does not only begin when you are elected. Leadership is about how we act and how we are constant in a world that feels increasingly divided and uncertain.

For the past five years each time I have delivered this annual address **we have faced major challenges**. Whether it was a funding shortfall, a water crisis, or a global pandemic; time and again we have been called to step up. Yes, it has tested us. We all have a few more grey hairs and wrinkles to show for it. But we have also proven – beyond any doubt – that **we can adapt, innovate and respond, no matter the crisis**.

A year ago, we battled some of the worst fires and worked with Eskom to get the lights back on for over 40,000 residents of the Central Karoo. Two years before that we were emerging from the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Before that we were stretching every drop of water, making sure that Cape Town's taps did not run dry.

Each of these moments and many more forced us to find new solutions, and today, I am proud to stand here and say that we have:

- Partnered with municipalities and the private sector that will add 5 700 MW of affordable, reliable renewable energy to the grid by 2035.
- Expanded our law enforcement and traffic efforts by deploying more officers and K-9 units to make our communities safer.
- Built schools in less than 100 days.

Dit is wat die Wes-Kaap definieër. Ons steek altyd ons hand op, maar nou vra ek dat ons almal nog inspring en meer doen.

How we respond—both as leaders and as residents—matters.

The way we engage with each other matters.

- Listening with compassion and responding with humanity matters.
- Taking personal responsibility—whether it's picking up litter or tackling big policy challenges—matters.
- Holding spaces for difficult conversations without inflaming divisions matters.

In times like these, it can be tempting to take the easy route—to play politics instead of solving the world's **wicked problems**. But that is not who we are. We are not afraid to make the tough calls, and difficult decisions because we know that when we focus on one clear goal we will achieve the extraordinary.

The centre will hold

This province is built on hard work, robust dialogue and listening.

In 2025 South Africa will host the G20 and ancillary events; and the Western Cape will host the **Regional Leaders Summit and our inaugural Investment Summit** and many others.

These will be key **platforms for us to amplify our voice and ensure that the principles of Constitutionalism, Rule of Law and respect for human rights** are protected.

The global order is in turmoil, and we will stand for those key principles and against the attempt to reshape the world in the paradigm of “might is right.”

This province has built key relationships with a myriad international partners who want to see **our country and this province thrive**. We will continuously seek to build and nurture these relationships because we know that **they make all parties stronger!** Our 30-year relationship with the State of Bavaria is just one of many examples.

We will always be candid, even when it is uncomfortable.

Ek hoop dat ons, deur dialoog te kies en die tyd te neem om na mekaar te luister, ons menslikheid kan behou en verbeter en dat die regering se kern **kan vasstaan, ongeag** wat op die randjies van die politiese debat ontvou.

One of the biggest risks facing us right now is that, if the promise of democracy and its outcomes does not materialise, many of our democracies will falter. If the frustrations of our residents remain unaddressed, decades of democratic progress will crumble. Because we know that **rigorous, successful democracies grounded in the rule of law are critical to economic growth.**

Helping businesses grow and create jobs - equipping you to get those jobs

Our singular focus for the next five years is clear: we will do everything we can to help businesses drive economic growth so that they create more jobs, so that you our residents can get those jobs.

This commitment is **encapsulated in our Provincial Strategic Plan 2025 – 2030** and is aligned to the national Medium-Term Development Plan, which will guide our work over the next term.

More people can find a job in the Western Cape than anywhere else in the country. For the last half of 2024 our employment rate was below 20% at 19,6%. The Western Cape now leads on all four employment metrics that Statistics South Africa measures quarterly.

In just the last few months, another 62,000 jobs – almost half of the 132 000 jobs created nationally - have been in the Western Cape. We now have:

- **South Africa’s highest Absorption Rate** at 55.2%, meaning more people looking for work are successfully finding jobs.
- **The highest Labour Force Participation Rate** at 68.7%, showing our economy's growing ability to absorb new jobseekers.

These are not just numbers. They represent real people—residents who are now part of our economy, earning an income, and securing a future for themselves and their families. This is the story of a province that is stepping up.

But our work is far from done. Unemployment is still **horrifyingly high**. One in five jobseekers is still unable to find work. We recognise the critical need that social grants play for the vulnerable, but I want us to rather celebrate people progressing off social grants because they have found a job and a chance to **step up** for themselves.

We also know that programmes like Expanded Public Works help our residents get that critical step up. Last week, the Western Cape Government hosted Community Information Sessions in Kwamandlenkosi, here in Beaufort West, informing residents of upcoming EPWP 2-month temporary employment opportunities.

A job is more than just financial security. It gives you purpose. It restores dignity. But **weak national economic growth is holding us back**. GDP per capita in 2023 was lower than it was in 2012. That means that rather than South Africans getting richer, they are in fact getting poorer, and the only way to change that is through strong economic growth which is the foundation of job creation. But between 2019 and 2023, the national economy grew by an average of just **0.3% per year**. Over the last five years, national employment increased by just **2.1%, not even keeping up with population growth – there were 58 million South Africans in 2019** with our population estimated at **63 million in 2024**.

Dink net as ons die ekonomiese groei van 1% na 2% na 5% kan beweeg – hoeveel meer mense sal die **waardigheid** wat met 'n werk gegaardgaan ervaar.

South Africa is charting a new path through our Government of National Unity (GNU).

We emerged from the 2024 general election a new country. The GNU has given South Africans a reason to feel hopeful again following years of national government failure.

We are seizing upon the opportunities that the GNU has brought. In the Western Cape we will do everything we can to ensure its success for our residents.

The GNU is imperfect. We acknowledge this. But I believe the centre will hold, and that all GNU partners – no matter their policies and ideologies – have one thing in common: putting our residents first so that we can see our country succeed.

Here in the Western Cape and South Africa we are often consumed with all that is wrong. But I was recently invited to participate in the Munich Security Conference and what struck me was that while the north is consumed with talk about tariffs, increasing military spending, wars, cuts to critical aid and division, here in South Africa and particularly in the Western Cape our focus has shifted much more to hope and optimism: in South Africa because of the hope that the GNU has given us all; in the Western Cape because we are the province of hope and opportunity in action.

The **GNU is essentially founded on compromises**, a key principle of democracy. In a world where people are seeking to split us into “us and them” I celebrate this give-and-take approach. Just two recent practical examples exemplify this for me:

- Last week I was in a meeting with the national Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, and the City of Cape Town. We were discussing regulations that we had grave concerns about. **We listened to each to each other’s differing viewpoints** and agreed that we would work towards **finding a compromise** that is agreeable to all three spheres of government within 60 days.
- We might not have a **tabled national budget right now**, but most political parties recognised the need to postpone the tabling of the national budget. Why? Because we were all standing up for not further burdening our citizens with increased taxes.

All South Africans have agreed that despite our differences **we will proudly represent this country as hosts of the G20**.

While the GNU has begun the difficult task of righting the wrongs of previous administrations, we are grappling with the consequences now. The next few years **are going to be very difficult for our country as we work to change South Africa’s trajectory**.

Many of the challenges remain with us. These challenges, particularly jumpstarting South Africa’s economy, will further intensify before the situation improves.

We know that if South Africa succeeds the Western Cape succeeds, and we will build on the foundations that this government has laid to ensure a thriving jobs-rich economy that supports the work of the GNU.

Indien ons ernstig daaroor is om meer werkseleenthede te skep, **moet** ons aanhou om druk te plaas om **volhoubare ekonomiese groei te verseker**.

This is why collaboration is key.

Through our partnerships with the **GNU** and initiatives like **Operation Vulindlela**, we will work to remove barriers to investment, cut red tape, and unlock the economic potential that **enables businesses to grow and employ more people**.

A critical part of Operation Vulindlela must be to **dramatically improve the performance of the Port of Cape Town (PoCT)** and developing other ports at Saldanha and Mossel Bay.

The TAD group from the Elgin region, comprising more than 50 farms, highlighted the estimated cost of inefficiencies at the PoCT to the province’s pear and apple industry at **nearly R1 billion a year. This translates into a loss of R26 000 per hectare of farmland**.

We are facilitating the establishment of a task team comprising multiple stakeholders, among them Wesgro and Transnet National Ports Authority, to develop solutions to operational challenges in and around the PoCT.

We cautiously welcome the progress being made. The port achieved a milestone late last year by handling the longest vessel ever to call at the container terminal: the more than 348 metre long MSC Ines.

If we act swiftly with purpose, we can dramatically **increase economic growth nationally to over 3% if the PoCT operates more efficiently.**

Like we invest in movement of freight and logistics we must also invest in the mobility of our residents. In Mobility Month, last October, I caught a train from Bellville to the Cape Town city centre. Tens of thousands of people rely on trains daily to get to work and school.

We are currently working with PRASA to support the ongoing restoration of rail as the backbone of public transport in our province. There used to be **600 000 daily trips taken every day in Cape Town, now our best estimation is 80 000.** It is clear that we have a lot more to do.

In December 2024 we celebrated 10 years of the Go George bus service. With its humble beginnings in 2014 with just 12 buses and 3 routes, this vital transport lifeline has grown to 133 buses servicing 33 routes over more than 460 kilometres. Thousands of George residents rely on this service, linking them daily to economic opportunities.

In October 2024, we launched a new Go George bus service linking Thembalethu to the George Industrial Area. This represents significant progress, bringing additional services to the community of Thembalethu, which has embraced the service, with daily weekday passenger trips nearing 21,000.

The Western Cape is proving that when the right policies and infrastructure are in place, the right investments follow, and jobs are created.

The Western Cape has the track record to lead South Africa's economic resurgence

In my office, I have a map of the world with our province at the top of the world, because we are the gateway to the rest of South Africa and Africa:

- We have attracted 296 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects, injecting more than R171 billion into the economy with Cape Town and Stellenbosch ranked among the top 20 South African cities for inward FDI initiatives.
- Between 2021 and 2023, we recorded 35 direct investment projects from European Union member states alone, totalling R7.37 billion.
- One of South Africa's biggest cement companies is constructing a new R3 billion plant here.
- Our Red Tape Reduction Unit has so far achieved a saving of over R2,4 billion for businesses. We have over 300 000 small, micro, and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) in this province – these are the drivers of our economy and jobs.
- Our SMME Booster Fund has enabled 1 185 small businesses, creating over 1 000 jobs, and sustaining 5 000 more.
- Our "Getting YOU to Work" initiative – or the Jobseekers Travel Voucher programme - is working to unlock the barriers to jobseekers to get to their job interviews. Over 150 employers have partnered with us to issue vouchers to jobseekers; more than 2,300 jobseekers have registered for vouchers; roughly 50% of surveyed voucher users have found employment; and over 90% report that the programme has been beneficial to them.

With over 240,000 people employed in the agriculture sector in the Western Cape, its potential for further job creation is undeniable.

That is why we must do even more to grow the many opportunities in this critical industry. Over the past several years the Western Cape's agri-processing exports to the rest of Africa increased from 35% to 37%, and the relative share of primary agriculture and agri-processing to the Americas increased from 6% to 9% and 7% to 10%.

Over the past year, we have made significant progress in supporting our agricultural sector and rural communities. Among our achievements:

- **35 rural projects completed**, creating **1,417 job opportunities** and rehabilitating **31,471 hectares** of agricultural land.
- Direct support for **13 red meat producers, two grain producers, and 19 black commercial farmers**.
- Assistance for **smallholders, subsistence farmers, and food security initiatives**, helping **3,930 households** establish food gardens.
- Funding for the **Lower Olifants River Water Users Association** to maintain **268 km** of concrete-lined canals—to support **approximately 840 farms** in the region.
- Investing R25 million to modernise the Provincial Veterinary Laboratory—ensuring that the food you eat is safe and that our farmers are protected from preventable livestock diseases.
- In the past financial year alone, our Veterinary Export Certification office issued **15,203 export certificates**—confirming that animals and animal products from this province meet international standards.

And our efforts to further enable tourism to grow more jobs are paying off.

Tourism is a critical economic driver. The World Economic Forum estimates that for every 30 new tourists to a location, 1 job is created. We have, therefore, set a target of 1 million additional international tourists which will help create over 33,000 more jobs.

The number of arrivals at Cape Town International Airport in December 2024 soared to their highest in 12 years! 160, 537 international arrivals were recorded in just one month.

This is largely due to our **Cape Town Air Access initiative**. This project shows that long term work pays off. From its humble beginnings almost a decade ago, Cape Town Air Access is now flying higher than ever. This initiative between the provincial government, Wesgro, and Cape Town International Airport is further opening the Western Cape's skies to more tourists and destinations. Seven new airlines, through 7 routes are touching down in the Western Cape, with one million inbound seats added.

On Saturday night we welcomed the first tour operators from China under the **Trusted Tour Operating Scheme to Cape Town International Airport**. Next time I am at the airport, I hope that I will be welcoming the first passengers from the direct flight between Cape Town and Shanghai.

At sea, we continue to welcome visitors. The cruise industry contributed **R1.32 billion to the Western Cape's economy during the 2023-24 season**, up from R1.2 billion the previous season, despite a slight drop in ship calls. Cruise passengers, vessels, and crew generated R1.5 billion in expenditure, supporting 1,965 jobs across various sectors.

As ons egter wil aanhou om hierdie fondasies wat ons gelê het as 'n hefboom te gebruik, moet ons seker wees dat ons 'n arbeidsmag het wat toegerus is om hierdie geleentheid aan te gryp.

Die sukses van ons provinsie begin in ons klaskamers, in ons gesondheids-fasiliteite, op ons plaas en in ons landelike gebiede, waar ons inwoners toerus om 'n **welvarende ekonomie wat ryk is aan werksgeleentheid, binne te tree**.

Educating our future workforce

Our matric class of 2024 excelled with a **pass rate of 86.6%**, a 5.1 percentage point increase on last year, as well as the highest pass rate ever for the Western Cape.

Each grade 12, their families, communities and schools contributed to this achievement through their dedication and hard work.

The province's bachelors pass rate, which is a crucial indicator of the quality of matric passes, has also increased by 5.6 percentage points to **47.8%**.

We are incredibly proud that our province and matrics achieved the top Mathematics and Physical Science pass rates again this year, with a **Mathematics pass rate of 78.0%, and Physical Science pass rate of 79.4%**. Our candidates achieved our highest number of subject distinctions to date, with 11,699 candidates achieving a total of 27,948 distinctions. This is the second-highest distinctions rate nationally.

We also have the second-highest pass rate in the country for Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN) at 91.0%, and the highest bachelors pass rate in the country for LSEN learners at 63.3%.

And once again, **South Africa's top matric learner comes from this province!** Well done to Rayyan Ebrahim from Pinelands High School.

We are especially proud of learners and teachers who, despite their circumstances, steadily improve their results:

- Joe Slovo Secondary School in Khayelitsha is one such institution. This school scored a 99.3% matric pass rate, up from 87.2% the previous year and their highest pass rate since the National Senior Certificate was introduced in 2008.

But there are many more from across the province:

- Spine Road High School – Mitchell's Plain – Pass 100%, Bachelor's Pass 91.8%
- Mondale High School – Mitchell's Plain – Pass 99.2%, Bachelor's Pass 81.0%
- Usasazo Secondary School – Khayelitsha – Pass 99.1%, Bachelor's Pass 61.8%
- COSAT – Khayelitsha – Pass 98.3%, Bachelor's Pass 74.4%
- South Peninsula High School – Diep River – Pass 98.3%, Bachelor's Pass 79.6%
- Bernadino Heights Secondary – Kraaifontein – Pass 98.0%, Bachelor's Pass 79.1%
- Rylands High School – Gatesville – Pass 97.8%, Bachelor's Pass 73.2%
- Chris Hani Secondary – Khayelitsha – Pass 97.8%, Bachelor's Pass 68.8%
- Kairos Secondary School – Heidelberg – Pass 97.3%, Bachelor's Pass 52.7%
- Hector Peterson Secondary School – Wallacedene – Bachelor's Pass 97.0%, Bach 55.7%
- Uxolo Secondary School – Khayelitsha – Pass 96.2%, Bachelor's Pass 56.5%
- Sentraal High School – Beaufort West – Pass 95.5%, Bachelor's Pass 62.7%
- Bastiaanse Secondary School – Beaufort West – Bachelor's Pass 86.9%, Bach 20.0%
- Laingsburg High School – Laingsburg – Pass 82.7%, Bachelor's Pass 30.8%
- Zwartberg High School – Prince Albert – Pass 97.1%, Bachelor's Pass 36.8%

These results prepare our matric learners to become part of a **thriving and growing workforce in this province, country and across the world.**

Our efforts to further improve the quality of our future workforce are being acknowledged. The World Bank's Education Sector analysis report, released last September, has singled out initiatives such as the #BackOnTrack and Rapid School Build programmes as examples of the Western Cape Education Department's ability to be agile and creative in overcoming problems.

15,450 Grade 4 and 7 learners from 223 primary schools will attend Saturday classes this year, as part of the #BackOnTrack initiative. These classes will focus on Mathematics and Languages.

8,000 Grade 12 learners will receive academic support as they prepare for their matric exams this year. This will include Saturday classes and revision camps during the Autumn, Winter and Spring school holidays.

Our teachers will also receive professional development support through the #BackOnTrack programme.

In-person training will be provided to **2,483 Grade 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 teachers, with a primary focus on Mathematics and Languages.**

Additionally, online training will be available to all teachers for Grade 8 Languages and a variety of Grade 10 and 12 subjects. These sessions were well attended last year, with sessions attracting up to 540 teachers.

The department's annual systemic test results for 2024 confirm that good progress is being made in **reversing the learning losses** we saw due to the Covid-19 pandemic through the #BackOnTrack initiative. The Western Cape is the only province in the country that conducts annual systemic testing in Mathematics and Language for learners in Grades 3, 6 and 9.

The **pass rates for Grade 9 Mathematics and Grade 3 Language are now higher than they were in 2019.**

A University of Stellenbosch study also confirms that #BackOnTrack has demonstrated significant success in mitigating learning losses caused by the pandemic. The study found that the programme **achieved subject-specific recovery of an equivalent of up to 205 school days' worth of learning, and that gains were most pronounced for Afrikaans- and isiXhosa-speaking learners** who attended extra #BackOnTrack classes.

I sat in on one of these classes last year and was thrilled at the eagerness of learners and teachers to take part in this programme, even if it meant sacrificing a few Saturdays.

Investing in Our Youth: The Workforce of Tomorrow

Ons toewyding aan ons provinsie se jeug **begin en eindig nie net in die klaskamer nie**. Ons **belê in en ondersteun die arbeidsmag van die toekoms** – ons verseker dat jong mense die **vaardighede, kennis en geleenthede** kry wat hulle nodig het om hul hande op te steek en om te floreer.

While our **youth unemployment rate is more than 10 percentage points lower** than other provinces, we must keep pushing forward. That is why we are working with partners to create pathways into **jobs, entrepreneurship, and further education**:

- **Our Experiential Learning Programme** has helped **over 12,000 young people** gain skills in fields ranging from artisanal trades and clothing and textiles **to business process outsourcing and hospitality**.
- **In 2024, 417 matriculants** got their first work experience through **the First Work Experience PAY Programme, and in 2025 465 interns have registered**.
- **The MOD Programme** will expand to **500 locations**, reaching **200,000 learners annually**. In 2024 alone, it supported **over 65,000 learners** across **181 MOD Centres**.
- **1,500 work opportunities** will be created through our partnership with **Northlink College**, helping TVET students gain practical experience in **coaching and recreation**.

We could not achieve these results without our **private sector and NGO partners**:

- **Fancourt Hotel** has taken in **over 60 YeBoneers** for training.
- **Lepco** is creating **logistics entrepreneurship opportunities** for 10 young people.
- **Dotsure and Old Mutual** are building a pipeline into the **insurance industry**, while hundreds of YeBoneer alumni are now studying **teaching and early childhood development**.
- Our **Masakh'iSizwe Bursary Programme** is supporting **174 graduates** in the built environment field, with **61% of graduates** placed in jobs within the **provincial Department of Infrastructure**.

Youth Impacting Their Communities

- **40,000 children** have been supported to develop a love of reading, thanks to **YeBoneers increasing library literacy hours**.
- **6,000 caregivers** have been empowered to help children with **literacy and life skills**.
- **The Community Art Centres Network (CACNET)** has grown from **12 to 52 centres**, providing safe spaces for youth to express themselves and tackle social issues.

Chrysalis Academy: A Legacy of Empowerment

- As the **Chrysalis Academy** celebrates **25 years of transforming lives**, we are reminded of the **power of resilience**. Many of its graduates, along with our **YeBoneers**, are proof that even when faced with adversity, **hard work and determination lead to success**.
- Through all these initiatives, we are **instilling a culture of excellence**. We are teaching our young people to **work hard, aim high, and never give up**—just as **this government does every single day**

A healthy and cared for population

For the Western Cape to thrive economically, we must support our residents when they need it most and ensure that they are healthy to take advantage of opportunities – whether they be in the classroom on the sports field or in the job market. That is why we are investing all we can, despite our constraints, in our health and social services.

Daar is te veel huishoudings in die Wes-Kaap wat voedselonsekerheid in die gesig staar. Leerders kan nie in die klas konsentreer as hulle honger is nie. Belemmerde groei en ontwikkeling is 'n ernstige probleem. Bykans een uit vyf kinders onder tweejarige ouderdom se groei en ontwikkeling word hierdeur geraak. Dit het 'n vernietigende uitkrangeffek. Die provinsie kan teen 2040 tot R357 miljard se huishoudelike spandering verloor as gevolg van belemmerde groei en ontwikkeling.

We have established a **Cabinet-level Committee on Food security and Nutrition**, which draws in resources from multiple departments to lead a coordinated effort to reduce food insecurity, improve nutrition, and support families.

For those who have fallen to the margins of society, NGOs and government are often their last hope. But in this tough economic climate, NGOs are among those hardest hit, even as their role in supporting our most vulnerable residents remains critical. That is why we have partnered with the Health Foundation to implement the **Cape Care Fund**—an initiative to strengthen support for organisations that provide essential care and assistance.

Our **GBV Ambassador Programme**, has trained over 170 residents to raise awareness in their communities about gender-based violence. These tenacious individuals think little of giving of their own time as part of our broader efforts to end all forms of violence, at the same time offering much-needed help to our social workers. Ordinary residents are stepping up and help us to end this scourge.

One such individual, **Dawn Marcus, has joined us here this evening**. Dawn's involvement with this programme started at one of our First Thursdays, when she enquired with Minister Jaco Londt about how she could become more involved in her community. She was trained up and is now a proud GBV Ambassador in her community in Goodwood. We need more people like Dawn and our other GBV Ambassadors to amplify the voices of those of us who say, “We have had

enough of this scourge!" Just yesterday, we launched the **eighth Gender-Based Violence Ambassador programme for the Central Karoo**.

To expand our service footprint, we have taken our services on the road. Three DSD mobile offices – the first initiative of this kind for the Western Cape and South Africa - are traveling across the province, to bring services and dignity closer to you.

They have all the features of a regular office and can access far-flung communities offering psychosocial support and protection services. Already these mobile centres have **travelled over 8,000 km and assisted nearly 400 people** and counting.

We are making significant strides in healthcare infrastructure development, prioritising modernisation and accessibility for underserved communities. These projects not only enhance service delivery but also exemplify what can be achieved when government, private partners, and civil society work together, not against each other.

We have invested **R86 million in the construction of Eerste River Hospital's Acute Psychiatric Unit (APU)**. This is just one aspect of a bigger initiative to build APUs at health facilities across the province at a cost of R279 million. The following projects are under construction:

- Caledon Hospital
- Khayelitsha District Hospital
- New Somerset Hospital

There has been impressive progress in the construction and upgrading of the Ravensmead Bothasig and Ladismith healthcare facilities:

- The new Ravensmead Community Day Clinic (CDC), once completed, will include youth-friendly care, women's health, family healthcare, chronic disease management, mental health support, as well as emergency services.
- The existing CDC in Bothasig is being upgraded to serve more people.
- In 2024, we opened the new state-of-the-art **Ladismith Clinic**—a R25 million investment in quality healthcare. Relocated from the Alan Blyth Hospital grounds, this modern facility now meets the growing healthcare demands of the town. It offers **world-class services**, including chronic disease management, immunisations, family planning, and specialist care in **dentistry and physiotherapy**, among others.

Over the next decade, we will invest **R18.5 billion in metro healthcare infrastructure**, increasing capacity, efficiency, and access to specialised care. **Villiersdorp now has a new Ambulance Station** that houses three ambulances and a HealthNet vehicle to serve rural communities. This

improves emergency response times and provides a base for training EMS staff, benefiting over 15,000 residents and handling approximately 500 calls monthly.

The **Tygerberg Hospital Modernisation project** is proceeding well. This **R10 billion redevelopment** will transform this hospital into a cutting-edge facility, improving specialised care and addressing Cape Town's growing population needs.

Planning is under way to **deliver regional hospitals to the Klipfontein and Belhar communities.**

These initiatives represent a commitment to delivering dignified, high-quality healthcare, backed by innovation and collaboration, to benefit every resident of the Western Cape and ensure that when opportunity presents itself, they are **equipped to step-up.**

Building hope and jobs through infrastructure investment

Die regering se sleutel rol in die ondersteuning van ekonomiese groei is om grootliks in infrastruktuur te belê – deur belegging in gesondheidsdienste, maatskaplike dienste en onderwys, en ook deur fisiese infrastruktuur soos paaie, skole, klinieke en hospitale. Ons infrastruktuur projekte word deur die Wes-Kaapse Infrastruktuur Raamwerk 2025 oorsien.

In the last 10 years (2014/15 – 2024/25) the Western Cape Government has spent R98 855 526 000 on physical infrastructure investment! And we are seeing the fruits of that investment everywhere we look! Government investment lays the foundation for the private sector to build-upon and create a booming jobs-rich economy. For every R1 the Western Cape Government invests in infrastructure, R5,63 is stimulated in capital formation and investment directly and indirectly in the economy.

- If you go to Worcester and George, you can see new water projects that are far advanced.
- At the N7 Potsdam–Melkbos van Schoorsdrif Interchange a **R790 million project is under way.**
- In Malmesbury a new trunk road is under construction at a cost of **R650 million.**
- And at a combined R39,5bn for the next three years, the City of Cape Town' infrastructure budget is **80% bigger than the next biggest city – Johannesburg** – and almost 100% bigger than the third biggest, Durban. The vast bulk of this spend – a **full 75% – is earmarked for projects that will directly benefit Cape Town's lower income households.**
- Over the past three years, the growth of building plans in the Western Cape **exceeded the national average by 8.26%.** Building plans passed is a key economic indicator, reflecting positive economic activity and confidence.

Our roads are the **arteries of our economy.** Ensuring they are well-maintained and safe for all road users is critical, because safe, well-maintained roads get you safely to and from work and

leisure every day. Last year 117.55 kilometres of roads across the province were resealed and resurfaced. This is the equivalent of 837,307 square metres. By the end of the **current financial year, our road crews are aiming to repair and maintain more than 1 million square metres of road.**

We are reimagining urban centres and how communities interact with their surroundings. The Conradie Park development, built on the **Better Living Model**, represents the interplay of innovation and infrastructure development.

Earmarked for **3 500 residential units**, the development addresses the urgent need for affordable housing, combined with places of learning, healthcare facilities, retail spaces, and parks. This is the future of infrastructure in our province. The development has created **over 2,000 job opportunities and more than 90 economic opportunities for SMMEs**. The project is being leveraged to provide much-needed skills development and offer more than 180 learnership and graduate opportunities.

A safe province is a prosperous province

For communities to thrive, and for our economy to grow, residents, business owners, and investors **must feel safe.**

In August last year we took a significant step forward in our fight against crime by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Western Cape Government, City of Cape Town, and national government. **This agreement has ensured closer collaboration, better use of resources and a shared focus on data and evidence in policing.**

This MoU reflects the urgency that is needed to tackle rising crime. It adds substance to the concept of **improved collaboration** which is needed to take the fight to criminal syndicates. It is also a realisation that there is the need for policing to be decentralised to allow more stakeholders to have a say in how we collectively address this scourge.

We are working to ensure that this MoU serves as the nexus where all our crime-fighting resources are pooled, where we include community-based organisations – our Community Policing Forums and more than 500 Neighbourhood Watch groups comprising 16,869 members – in our efforts to make communities safer.

I am hopeful that this MOU will accelerate progress on our plans to collaborate with the SAPS on **destruction of illegal firearms here in this province** and completing **lifestyle audits done** for the top leadership of the SAPS in this province.

Our Law Enforcement Advancement Plan (LEAP), managed in partnership with the City of Cape Town, is just one example of what can be achieved when different spheres of government cooperate.

Our LEAP members have been incredibly busy making **12,074 arrests in 2024 alone!** Since LEAP's inception, **40,065 arrests have been made and more than 740 firearms have been taken off the streets of Cape Town.**

Last year, we initiated a trial redeployment of LEAP resources. This saw LEAP officers redeployed to 6 precincts in Cape Town in a double-up project. Together with a 120-member roving Reaction Unit and SAPS members, we have intensified our focus on areas with high murder rates and the trial is paying dividends. Crime statistics for Quarter 4 of 2024 saw major year-on-year increases in illegal firearm arrests in Delft (up 70%), Gugulethu (94%), Mitchells Plain (33%), and Philippi East (40%). These areas have benefitted from **increased policing resources** under this strategy. Similarly, **drug arrests have increased** in these hotspots, including Delft (43% increase), Gugulethu (114%), Khayelitsha (62%), and Philippi East (333%)

And we subject our work to international and external scrutiny. On the fringes of the Munich Security Conference, I met with the Institute for Security Studies, the Global Initiative and the Bavarian State Government. From 2023-2024 a study they oversaw tested whether brief, targeted, data-driven patrols could significantly reduce violent crime **without additional resources**. The study was done in collaboration with the SAPS, City of Cape Town and Western Cape Government. The study found that the targeted **approached reduced crime by 5 times the regular approach to policing** and in just eight hotspots prevented 100 contact crimes.

In the **rural communities of Mossel Bay, the Overstrand, and Swartland** municipal areas, our **Rural Safety and K-9 Units are also on patrol**. These units made 1,581 arrests in 2024.

Our Peace Officer programme offers another safety and security layer beyond Cape Town. 89 Peace Officer opportunities were created last year while 60 more graduates are being trained. In October, I attended the official opening of the Mossel Bay Municipality K-9 Unit facility. These units are taking a **bite out of crime**.

As we tackle today's challenges, we are also planning for tomorrow.

Sustainable funding for the future

Ons kan nie as 'n land aangaan op ons huidige finansiële koers nie en hierdie groeiende moeilike fiskale omgewing vereis dissipline, volhoubaarheid en belegging vir die toekoms. Die Nasionale regering moet sorg dat die twee enjins van Suid-Afrika se ekonomie – Gauteng en die Wes-Kaap ondersteun word om hulle volle potensiaal to bereik.

While government funding is being squeezed, our residents are also struggling to make ends meet.

We are all feeling the squeeze of **escalating food, electricity, and fuel prices**. But poor households especially are having to make impossibly difficult choices between feeding themselves or ensuring they have electricity.

The desperation among many of our communities is palpable. When I travel across our province, I see for myself the hardship, and it troubles me profoundly.

The unconscionably high Eskom tariff increases add to the pain so many households are already feeling. Between 2007 and 2022, the **cost of electricity went up by 650%**!

Ongoing budget cuts—driven by a growing national fiscal crisis—have left us with far less funding than we need to maintain our recognised high standard of service delivery and to support our most vulnerable residents. At the same time, our rapidly growing population is placing greater pressure than ever on our frontline services.

The **cuts to our Equitable Share and Conditional Grants are brutal**. The coming years will be tough as we work to rebuild our economy. Yet, even as our funding shrinks, our responsibilities grow.

The province's **population grew by nearly 20% between 2015 and 2024 – a 19.6%** increase over this period. Over the next decade, the Western Cape is expected to grow by another 2 million people. Of course, we welcome those who are making the Western Cape their home and are willing to contribute to our success, but we must find ways to simultaneously build our services to meet their needs.

We must find alternative ways to fund the critical investments needed to secure our future. That is why our Provincial Treasury is exploring new funding approaches. We know there are **external partners wanting to collaborate with us**—but they look for one key factor: a **strong record of governance**.

En ons staan in hierdie aspek trots. **Elke departement en entiteit onder ons bestuur het vir twee jaar in 'n ry ongekwalifiseerde oudits bereik** – dit is 'n bewysstuk van ons toewyding aan 'n skoon, verantwoordbare regering.

At local government level, the coalface of service delivery, our municipalities are stretching every cent to maintain high levels of service delivery.

In 2022/23, **20 Western Cape municipalities achieved an unqualified audit** with no findings and **6 municipalities achieved an unqualified audit with findings**.

Clean audits are not just a measure of good governance and sound financial management. They reflect our commitment to quality service delivery, improving the lives of our residents, and proving that we are a government of integrity.

Building a future-fit province

And while we work to ensure our financial sustainability, we are building a province that can confront the climate crisis and respond to the challenges and opportunities of the future.

I am honoured to hold the position of **co-chair for Africa of the Under2 Coalition**, where I am making the Western Cape, as well as South Africa and the African continent's voices heard on the impact of the climate crisis.

Through our steady investment in our disaster management network, we have built a world-class system that can respond to disasters speedily and professionally. As a region that is susceptible to natural disasters, we will keep investing in our disaster response teams. Since **2011, there have been about 55 disasters**, with **30 of these occurring within the last four years alone**. Our disaster officials are supported by teams from across government including our **“Yellow Fleet”, traffic officers and first responders**.

Innovation is not a buzzword—it is how we **solve problems, improve service delivery, and create opportunities**.

- Two bright young minds, **Thiedu Du Preez (from Vredenburg High) and Aadil Dawood (Bishops Diocesan College)**, represented South Africa at the **2024 Izmir International Innovation Science Energy Engineering Fair (IISEEF) in Turkey**—showcasing **the talent and innovation coming from our province**.
- In healthcare, we are embracing cutting-edge technology. **“Georgie”**, a **double robotic device**, now connects **George Hospital with specialists in Cape Town**, reducing unnecessary patient transfers and **bringing top-tier expertise closer to communities**.
- In social development, our **Social Work Integrated Management System (SWIMS)** is **cutting red tape** and giving social workers **more time to focus on helping people**, rather than being buried in paperwork. So far, **1,052 social service practitioners** are using the app, and **over 28,000 cases** have been logged. We are now expanding SWIMS to our **NGO partners**.

This is how we **step up**—by embracing **innovation** to improve **education, healthcare, and social services** for every resident of the Western Cape.

And while we are honing our ability to respond to disasters, innovating for our future, we also need to **build our water and energy security**.

A thriving jobs-rich economy needs reliable, affordable and renewable water and energy

While we can adapt to energy shortages, **we cannot survive without water**. That is why we have **repurposed our Energy Council into the Integrated Energy and Water Council**—laser-focused on both **water security and energy resilience**.

Despite good rainfall last winter, **we cannot afford to be complacent**. Annual rainfall is declining and could **drop by 30% by 2050**. Our **15-year Western Cape Integrated Drought and Water Response Plan** is already being implemented, ensuring that:

- **Science and collaboration** guide our approach.
- Residents and businesses remain **water-wise**, even in non-drought years.
- Investments in infrastructure **protect our water supply**.

The Western Cape's **electricity demand is growing fast**—from 4,000MW to 4,479MW this year alone. If we want to **grow our economy**, we must continue expanding **energy resilience**.

Our **Energy Resilience Programme** launched just two years ago, has already **unlocked 2,000MW of new energy development** and shown what can be achieved when you collaborate and focus on a critical foundation of the economy.

- Over **1 000 MW has been added** to the provincial grid (non-Eskom & non-REIPPPP).
- At this pace, we may even **beat our target before 2035** and become a net exporter of energy. This is expected to **attract between R21.6 billion and R68.4 billion in investment**.

Globally, **renewable energy is overtaking coal for the first time**. Here in South Africa:

- **Solar capacity** has jumped from **2.8GW to 7.8GW in just two years**.

- By late 2024, **710MW of rooftop solar PV** was installed in the Western Cape alone.
- Combined, **solar could soon generate nearly a fifth of Eskom's coal power capacity.**

The recent bouts of load shedding show that we cannot let our guard down. Eskom still faces serious challenges. **That's why we must keep forging ahead.**

We are **positioning the Western Cape as a leader in the next generation of energy.** Last year, I traveled to **Qatar with the Premiers of the Eastern Cape and Northern Cape** to expand our **Green Hydrogen (GH2) ambitions.** Through the **"Three Capes" GH2 corridor,** we aim to:

- **Drive economic growth.**
- **Create thousands of jobs.**
- **Fast-track our transition to net-zero emissions.**

And our municipalities are stepping up:

- **Hessequa Municipality** has broken ground on a **R210 million solar project** that will **make Riversdale load shedding-free.**
- **Saldanha Bay, Cape Town, Stellenbosch, and others** are embracing renewable energy at scale.

This is what **energy resilience in action** looks like.

Bringing the Western Cape Government closer to you our residents

Terwyl ons ons hande opsteek om te werk regoor die regering, **verdiep ons ook ons verbintenis met julle – ons inwoners.** Ek is baie trots op ons regering se **oop-deur beleid.** Ons praat nie net oor toeganklikheid nie – ons gee dit lewe deur **onafgekondigde oorsigsbesoeke, Kabinet uitreike en openbare vergaderings.** **Ons is 'n regering wat luister.**

When I travel across our province, I make a point of **visiting hospitals, clinics, and police stations unannounced.** I do this to:

- **See firsthand how services are being delivered.**
- **Hold public servants accountable** and thank **those same public servants** who work tirelessly under challenging conditions.

This is a **responsive government that works for you.**

Our **First Thursday initiative** has been a platform for residents to engage **directly** with government officials and municipalities. Over the past year alone, we've:

- **Registered and resolved 1,090 public queries.**
- Expanded access to **80 eCentres** across the province, bringing **digital services to rural communities.**

- **Processed 115,869 calls** through our **WCG Contact Centre**, with **98.34% resolved within target turnaround times**.

We know that **not everyone can easily reach a government office**. That is why we are taking digital services to far-flung areas. Last April, we **launched our first mobile eCentre in George**. On the very first day, a passerby popped in to update his CV—**within minutes, he left with a new CV and a smile**.

Since then, **1,836 residents** have used this state-of-the-art facility. During the **George building collapse tragedy**, the mobile eCentre played a critical role in supporting rescue efforts.

A huge thank you to the **officials who make this service possible—Jakobus Pretorius, Vinelic Afrikaner, and Gurshville George**. Your dedication is helping us **bring government closer to the people**.

Conclusion

We have all worked with the residents of this province to make the Western Cape the remarkable region that it is. In 2025 all of us must **step up for ourselves and each other**.

Many of our officials tell me of the pressures they are under but they often say to me, “We do this because we care, and we support one another”. This reflects the dedication of our officials.

Our peoples' needs, their aspirations, and expectations are at the heart of everything that our government does.

We have faced uncertainty before and have always managed to prevail.

Ons doen dit deur ons inwoners eerste te stel en deur saam te werk om uitdagings aan te pak. **Ons inwoners het ons gekies om te lei**, en ons moet nou die heilige mandaat wat by die stembus aan ons gegee is, vorentoe neem en aanhou om ons beloftes in daade te sit.

Beyond all the hard work we have put in over the past year, I am filled with pride **when I see government being done right like it is done here in die Wes Kaap**.

While there is much to do, we can feel proud for all that we have been able to achieve.

To mark the first day of the new academic year, I visited Timour Hall Primary in Plumstead. Amid all those brave faces of little ones starting their education journey, a mural in the newly refurbished media centre, which reads, "The sky is not the limit, it is just the beginning," has motivated me to keep going.

Urgency and hard work underscore how this government functions, because every day each of us is stepping up.

In the year ahead, every single day **we have a choice, we can choose to be negative, break down, fight among ourselves or we can choose to step up, be constructive**, to build a better province.

This year let us all make a choice to step up to build a better Western Cape.

Thank you, Baie Dankie, Enkosi

The Western Cape Government. For You.