

The Esidimeni 94

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Press statement from the CEO of The Council for Health Service Accreditation of Southern Africa (COHSASA), Ms Jacqui Stewart, on the report of the Office of the Health Ombud, Professor Malegapuru Makgoba, *No guns: 94+ silent deaths and still counting*.

“The deaths of 94 – and probably more – mental health patients in 2016 in Gauteng constitute a national tragedy in South Africa. Patients were transferred rapidly, in large numbers in a short time frame to 27 NGOs, all of which operated with invalid licences. The report found that the deaths of the patients were due to a high-level decision that was ‘unwise and flawed, with inadequate planning and a ‘chaotic’ and ‘rushed or hurried’ implementation process’,” says Ms Stewart.

The report concluded that “the project has brought ‘pain and anguish’ to many families, it has also brought national and international disrepute and embarrassment to South Africa, particularly its Health System.”

MP Wilmot James, Shadow Health Minister for the Democratic Alliance, has said: “There is no question that if we had credible healthcare facility surveillance the alarm to intervene would have gone off a long time ago and a chain of command would have reacted to prevent the deaths of former Life Esidimeni inhabitants who had been moved to unsuitable facilities elsewhere.”

“COHSASA is a credible healthcare facility evaluation and accreditation organisation and is ready and able to work with any organisation – in both private and public sectors – to ensure that this never happens again,” says Ms Stewart.

COHSASA has a set of standards that enable an independent evaluation of sub-acute healthcare facilities in terms of the resources, the credentials of care workers, clinical management, governance and all aspects related to meeting standards for delivering safe, quality patient care,” says Ms Stewart.

“Over the past 21 years, COHSASA – a not-for-profit based in Cape Town – has evaluated well over 600 facilities in Africa and is the continent’s only internationally accredited healthcare facility accreditation body. Since 2002, COHSASA has been accredited as a credible, independent health facility evaluator by the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua), a global body represented by some 70 countries.

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