**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COGTA COMMITTEE CALLS FOR INTENSIFICATION OF COVID AWARENESS AND DESTIGMATISATION AT WARD LEVELS

Parliament, Wednesday, 24 June 2020** – The Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs received a briefing from the Western Cape Provincial Government on its Covid-19 response plans.

The committee thanked Premier Alan Winde and his team for the update on their response to the pandemic. The committee noted that the testing backlog of 28 000 has been dealt with. However, as Cape Town is the epicentre of the virus and is ahead of the curve by two to three weeks, the city will soon reach its peak, placing additional demands on health services. The committee welcomed the deployment of provincial ministers to the various hotspots in the province.

The committee heard that since the unbanning of the sale of alcohol, the number of trauma cases has increased 66% at major hospitals. This puts pressure on the number of beds available for Covid-19 patients, as the province reported that it has a shortfall of 300 beds for the peak.

Testing, tracing, isolating and quarantining patients is at the heart of curbing the infection rate. However, many patients do not comply with isolation and quarantine requirements. The committee would like to know more about this and about the measures the province is putting in place to deal with it.

 The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Faith Muthambi, called for additional awareness campaigns in partnership with ward structures on social distancing and to destigmatise Covid-19. Some people behave as if it is business as usual without taking the necessary precautions to curb the spread of the disease.

The committee notes that evictions during lockdown are illegal and therefore wanted clarity on the housing destroyed in Hout Bay. The committee also requested information on the conditions under which homeless people are living in Strandfontein.

On the issue of the secret tape recording implicating the Western Cape Provincial Minister of Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, the committee is not satisfied that it was a political agreement with the then national minister to have an administration of the municipality put in place. This issue will need to be probed further, as similar events are currently happening in Knysna municipality.

A functioning public transport system is important for the working class, thus the committee is encouraged to hear that engagements are the N2 express bus service and the rehabilitation of the Central railway line are continuing. It is expected that the rail service will resume operation on 1 July.

The committee will await the Covid-19 policy for funerals in the Western Cape.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, MS FAITH MUTHAMBI.**