**African Christian Democratic Party**

**12 July 2019

ACDP Parliament
Budget Vote 16: Health
Speech by Marie Sukers MP**

***“Our hospitals should not be mortuaries but places of healing”* – says ACDP MP**

“Chairperson,

The ACDP notes yesterday’s approval of the Nation Health Insurance bill by Cabinet, which the President - in his State of the Nation Address - said aims to reduce inequality and improve access to public and private health facilities.

We have one common enemy in this room, and that is indifference. Indifference to the plight of the poor and vulnerable. Indifference is at the heart of a man who died outside a Western Cape provincial hospital after waiting to be treated since the early hours of the morning. Indifference when a nurse cringes to perform basic observations on a patient because of the state of his appearance. Indifference when a young mother inexperienced, scared and overwhelmed after being up all night with a sick infant, is not addressed in her mother tongue but made out to feel stupid, backward, foolish and unintelligent because a primary care nurse could not be bothered to take the time to listen! We have to ensure that we foster a caring and compassionate health sector as set out in the White Paper on Health. The target set out by the department of 50% satisfaction at Primary Health Care facilities does not reflect that aim and however, is sadly far from being realized!

This said, we can learn from the example of the health care facility in Ravensmead, where I have experienced, first hand, their commitment to best practice. Their example should be lauded and emulated throughout the nation. Pockets of best practice as displayed at the health care facility need to be duplicated nation-wide. I visited the facility during the elections and was met by a wide eyed, passionate young woman, a third generation health professional, and she impressed me with her enthusiasm! We need to develop a retention strategy for our doctors, pharmacists, nurses and start with the basics, ensure their safety! We cannot afford to continue to bleed talented, passionate health professionals!

Effective Intersectoral collaboration is cited by researches as key to address social determinants: Honourable Minister, we as the ACDP are calling on this department together with the ministries of Social Development and Human Settlements to address with urgency the need for special housing. We have been urging the government for years to respond adequately to the plight of our most vulnerable people, this includes those suffering from mental illness, trauma or abuse. Families are suffering under the weight and trauma of caring for those who are mentally disturbed. Our current facilities are limited and individuals who can be restored to health deteriorate even further due to a lack of treatment and care that includes special needs housing. Mental illness has increased due to drug addiction and the destructive effects of drugs such as tik and unga. We implore the Minister to support this policy that has been waiting for the last twenty years. Care cannot be siloed, it must be linked.

Lastly, I wish to quote Florence Nightingale, who said and I quote: “It may seem a strange principle to enunciate as the very first requirement in a hospital that it should do the sick no harm”, close quote.

Our hospitals should not be mortuaries but places of healing.

I thank you!”

**-END-

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