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## **Report to Caucus 13<sup>th</sup> April 2020**

### **RE: COVID 19 LOCKDOWN PROVINCIAL FOOD RELIEF INITIATIVE**

Neither the Provincial sphere of government nor the Provincial Department of Social Development (DSD) have a legislative mandate to provide social relief in the form of short term grants, vouchers or food parcels during a disaster. This is a function which clearly resides with the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) as per Chapter 3 of the Social Assistance Act. Furthermore, the Department of Social Development has neither the systems nor the personnel to manage large scale food distribution.

Unfortunately, SASSA's local offices are closed during the lockdown in terms of the National Minister of Social Development's Directive for the lockdown, Gazetted on 30 March 2020. This means SASSA is unable to take any new grant applications during this period, although it is continuing to provide grants to 1.6 million existing beneficiaries in the province.

SASSA nationally has set up a call centre to receive applications for social relief of distress grants, but the call centre is highly congested and, in any event, SASSA in the Western Cape has been unable to provide food parcels for many weeks following the depletion of its previous year's budget. The first food parcels that SASSA will be providing during this time will only be delivered from next week, 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2020. With a relatively small budget of R10m for Social Relief of Distress for the entire financial year, SASSA's food parcels will be depleted very rapidly. Thus far we have received no indication from the National level that SASSA will receive any additional funds to boost its capacity to provide social relief during this unprecedented disaster.

As a result of the huge risk this situation poses to food security in households which have lost their income during the lockdown period, the Western Cape, Department of Social Development, DSD, has taken the decision to re-prioritise a total of R35m of its budget to provide 20 000 hot meals per day at 92 feeding sites and distribute 50 000 food parcels which will last families of 4/5 for up to a month. The public has been notified that they can apply for this form of assistance via the Western Cape Government Call Centre, which is being capacitated with additional staff from DOTP (an increase from 17 operators to 80 this week). The parcels are currently being delivered to the beneficiaries who have been screened and assessed by DSD social workers. R20m has been paid to four NGOs to prepare and transport the parcels, namely SANZAF, Red Cross, Mustadifin and Islamic Relief. All of these organisations have a proven track record in disaster relief.

In addition to the distribution of food parcels, DSD has re-opened its funded ECD feeding schemes, of which about 60% or 700 ECDs kitchens are operational thus far, reaching

around 50 000 children per day, and the WCED has started a special feeding scheme for the 483 000 children who normally benefit from the school feeding scheme during term times. The WCED has received an additional R18m for this purpose from Provincial Treasury.

DSD has obtained a warehouse storage site from the Provincial Department of Transport and Public Works for large scale donations, and has appointed a team to track and manage all donation offers from the public sector. Where possible, this team is directing donors to work with local humanitarian relief NGOs in order to keep the donations from being stored by government and delayed by PFMA red tape.

It should be noted that the Provincial Government is not working on food relief alone. There are a massive number of NGOs and private sector donors, volunteers etc., which have come forward to assist communities independently of government. Municipalities are also launching initiatives, which we welcome and thank them for as the challenge is huge and resources are limited.

Further planning is currently underway for a second stage of food relief now that the lockdown has been extended. We expect to announce the details of this by the end of the week. The Province has followed a District Led approach which sees District Mayors, participating in the ProvJOC and hosting District JOCS. The Department of Local Government, led by Minister Anton Bredell and his HOD, Mr Graham Paulse are the interface with Local Government. Councillors are requested to work through their Mayors to forward information or obtain feedback. I am aware that some Constituency Heads have attended District JOCS.

I trust the above clarifies any concerns you may have. Should you require additional information or have any concerns or enquiries kindly address them to myself ([Sharna.fernandez@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:Sharna.fernandez@westerncape.gov.za)), the Head of Ministry, Ms Ananda Nel ([Ananda.Nel@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:Ananda.Nel@westerncape.gov.za)) or our Community Liaison Officer, Ms Colleen Ryan ([colleen.ryan@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:colleen.ryan@westerncape.gov.za)).

Your support in this regard is valued.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sharna Fernandez', written over a large, light-colored oval shape.

**SHARNA FERNANDEZ**  
**MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: WESTERN CAPE**  
**DATE: 13th April 2020**

## **Annexures**

1. List of feedings sites in the Western Cape
2. Food relief information leaflet: English version
3. Food relief information leaflet: Afrikaans version
4. Food relief information leaflet: isiXhosa version
5. MEC of Social Development: Media statement