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MEDIA STATEMENT

75 ELDERLY GET THE GIFT OF SIGHT

BHISHO — After years suffering from poor eyesight, 75 elderly people have been given a new lease on life after they had their cataracts removed at St Barnabas Hospital in Libode over the weekend.

The cataract surgeries were part of a medical outreach that the Eastern Cape Department of Health embarked on in partnership with the South African National Council for the Blind (SANCB).

Out of 150 people who were screened, 75 were operated on, bringing an end to years of waiting for cataract surgery.

MEC for Health Nomakhosazana Meth, who visited the hospital to witness the life-changing surgeries, described the outreach as a success.

“Everybody is happy. We are grateful to our partners. When we joined the department in 2021 we did pronounce to say we will use partners to fast track the work that we do.

“We will continue with these outreach programmes so that we take services to where people are and bring hope to our people. We are grateful to the South African National Council for the Blind for being a reliable partner all these years.

“This is yet another story of good progress as we continue to improve the quality of services that we offer and improve people’s quality of life,” she said.

The cataract surgeries at St Barnabas were the latest that the department and the SANCB have partnered in.

Hundreds of people have been successfully operated in at Nompumelelo Hospital in Peddie, Butterworth Hospital, Frontier Hospital in Komani, St Elizabeth Hospital in Lusikisiki and Life St Dominic’s Hospital in East London.

The beneficiaries said they were happy with how the surgeries went.

Siphethe Phatsha said he started experiencing eyesight problems while he was still working in Johannesburg, years ago.

“I am very happy I have finally had this operation. I am also happy that all of us who were operated on had successful operations.

“I can already feel that my eyesight will be restored,” he said after the surgery.

Nolulamile Khatshaza agreed.

“I started experiencing problems with my eyes in 2017. I have been trying to get help since then so I am happy that I did get the help that I desperately needed.

“I am very happy. My quality of life will improve now. I am very grateful to God for helping me,” she said.

MEC Meth said more cataract surgeries will be done around the province with the next work being in Matatiele, on Friday May 5.

Issued by the Eastern Cape Department of health.

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