

The Deputy Chair of Chairs Hon Duba  
Transnet CEO Portia Derby  
Acting Executive Mayor Namette  
The HOD ECDOH – Dr Wagner  
The Executive Management of ECDOH and all the officials present  
Transnet management  
Our heroes without capes, healthcare workers  
Councillors  
Members of the media  
Ladies and gentlemen

Molweni, good morning, goeie more

Year 2020 will go down in history as a year of misery for it ushered the world in the calamity of the gigantic proportion. As people across the globe we have never anticipated that the world would ever be confronted by this kind of outbreak. We have all learnt in the harshest way and we are left with no choice but to fight and protect lives of our people.

As the 6<sup>th</sup> administration we are acutely aware of our fiscal constraints but are also mindful of our inherent obligation to stand in defence of our people against the socio-economic threats. In recognising our own deficiencies, we have adopted an embrasive approach to partnerships and collaborations. Transnet has just been an appropriate fitting to that puzzle and we sincerely thank this important organ of our state for coming on board and dispatching such an important machinery in the war against covid 19. We greatly welcome Transvaco in this province of legends and I want to give an assurance to the leadership of Transnet that the train will be optimally utilized in this province. This is a good testimony to demonstrate to our people and the world that COVID-19 is not a government problem but a societal issue and it is through partnerships such as these that a victory against this disease may be achieved.

We remain grateful for the support as this virus needs all hands on deck. When we partner with such institutions, we are able to ramp up our vaccination programme and reach as many people as possible.

As of September 11, we have administered one million, eight hundred and fifteen thousand and seven hundred and seventy-seven (1,815,777) vaccines on one million, two hundred and eighty-eight thousand and seven hundred and thirty five (1,288,735) people. Of those, nine hundred and forty-three thousand and six hundred and seventy (943,670) people have been fully vaccinated.

This means 1 in 5 people in the province is fully vaccinated. In fact, the Eastern Cape is the lead province in the country, having vaccinated 21,8% of our four million four hundred and ninety seven thousand, two hundred and twenty four (4,497,224) eligible persons over the age of 18 years.

We must say we are happy with how people came forward when it was their age group's turn to be vaccinated, but sadly we have been noticing vaccine hesitancy, especially among men. We can't afford to have the vaccination programme stagnate.

We encourage Men of this glorious province, the "home of legends" to heed this call of vaccination. Come out in numbers and vaccinate - we are confident that they will indeed come in numbers to this train. No amount of misinformation shall deter the Men of this province from vaccination. I am quite confident that our fathers and brothers will definitely choose to protect themselves, their families and our communities rather than face the high risks associated with COVID19 when none is not vaccinated. As one of the people who has taken the vaccine, it is natural to be anxious. I want to reassure those who don't like injections, that the procedure is quick- you hardly feel the needle and before you know it, you are vaccinated by our caring and kind teams.

To improve access to vaccination, we have travelled the length and breadth of our province, taking this crucial and lifesaving service directly to people. We have done this by partnering with businesses, government entities, NGOs, civil society and communities at large.

To date we have vaccinated four hundred and eighty thousand two hundred and forty-three (480 243) citizens over the age of 60 years – that is 62% of our seven hundred and eight thousand, eight hundred and ninety-four (778,894) over 60year olds. Our senior citizens have been vaccinated while queuing for their social grants as well as through our fixed and outreach services.

The EC has one thousand two hundred and twenty-six (1,2246) vaccination sites with the Nelson Mandela Bay area, having fifty-five (55) daily active sites, supplemented by pop-up weekend pop-up sites. In the Bay area, we have administered a total of two hundred and eighty-five, six hundred and ninety (285,690) vaccines with two hundred and four thousand, six hundred and seventy-one (204,671) persons fully vaccinated. This represents 23,7% of the eligible population fully vaccinated in NMMM.

All these efforts have contributed to us slowly but surely getting closer to our target of vaccinating 4,9-million people and achieving herd immunity.

And now with this Transvaco vaccine train we'll be able to reach more people. Between now and December 16 when the train ends its vaccination programme in Komani, thousands and thousands of people would have been vaccinated through this wonderful initiative.

The fact that the Transvaco vaccine train handover is here in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro – one of the regions that continue to give us sleepless nights when it comes to active COVID-19 cases – is very important as we have to get active cases down while vaccinating people.

We are relieved to see a downward trend in the number of new cases and active cases across the province for the last three running weeks. At the end of the last completed week, there were 2,357 active cases, compared to 3,240 active cases the week before – this is 883 fewer cases and 27% less than the preceding week. The seven-day moving average has also decreased, with 177 new cases reported in the last week compared with 243 new cases in

the preceding week – this is also a 27% decrease. The number of COVID19 hospitalisations has also decreased with 157 patients admitted to public hospitals in the NMM and 137 patients admitted within the private sector. The vaccination drive will certainly increase the protection of our citizens from severe illness, hospitalisation and death.

We are gathered here today in the first stop of Transvaco and we are certain that our people will make use of this train. We have started making the taking of jab fashionable and I know people of Nelson Mandela Metro across the age groups will flood the social networks showing the world that they have taken the jab in style in Transvaco

I have no doubts in my mind that people from East London, eMdantsane, eQonce and Komani will seize the opportunity and vaccinate on this beautiful train.

Over and above our efforts to scale up the vaccination programme, this Transvaco mobile train is just what the doctor ordered. Not only does it ensure we continue vaccinating as many people as possible, but it also alleviate some pressure on our dedicated and hardworking healthcare workers who have valiantly been at the forefront of this fight since day one. Thus far, amongst our vaccinated healthcare workers there have been only 359 workers who became infected with only 16, less than 4%, admitted to hospital. Of these 16 who were admitted to hospital, all were discharged and all have recovered.

At one of our hospitals in Uitenhage, there are forty-two (42) COVID19 positive patients of whom thirty-nine (39) were NOT vaccinated. We really need to emphasise what is irrefutable - that being vaccinated protects you against serious disease, hospitalisation and death.

The Covid 19 pandemic has proven beyond any reasonable doubts that the war against public health threats cannot be waged by our health department alone, but requires a combined effort from the entire government and its agencies, civil society, and private sector. This is the only available panacea to public health threats. Today is a bright day for the people of Nelson Mandela Metro and the people of the Eastern Cape. Transnet has been our trusted force in the provision of primary health care. This programme has been done through the Phelophepa healthcare train which has helped thousands of people around the country with primary healthcare needs.

Ladies and gentlemen, we might have experienced challenges when we started rolling out the vaccine programme, but this was out of our control as there was a global shortage of the vaccine. But now that has been addressed, we are forging ahead with the vaccination programme, full steam ahead – excuse the pun! But we don't want to leave anyone behind.

There's an Arabian proverb that I like which says "He who has health has hope, and he who has hope has everything."

This Transvaco mobile train adds to the hope we have that one and one day soon enough we will finally win this war against this virus. This mission shall only be achieved through purposeful actions such as this one that we are celebrating today. We are celebrating today

precisely because it is through these creative initiatives that we remain optimistic that herd immunity will be attained.

We have always confirmed on many platforms that we cannot afford to be complacent and drop the ball when we are so close to the finish line. We are confident that through collaborations, victory is certain! The lessons that we may extract from this pandemic are enormous and I am taken back to 2005, when former President of the United States of America Barrack Obama became prophetic. He wrote in the New York Times foreseeing what would be declared a world disaster in a decade and few years to come. “We recommend that the administration works with congress, public health officials, the pharmaceutical industry, foreign governments and international organisations to create a permanent frame work for curtailing the spread of future infectious diseases” and firmly hold the view that Obama was right. We have Covid 19 today. I want us to learn from his prophesy and start building a public health safety wall that will curtail our people not only against covid 19 but also against potential future outbreaks.

We also welcome the decision by the South African Health Products Authority (Sahpra), which has approved the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine for use in children aged 12 and older. Details of this will be released in due course as we will wait for guidance from the Minister on when we can start vaccinating our teens.

We will all be safe.

We have had many stories from conspiracy theorists and anti-vaxxers as to why people should not take the vaccine. Interestingly, those people peddling such untruths and fake news are not medical professionals.

Vaccines were not only developed now because of COVID-19. They have been around for many years. Kudala kwagonywa abantu begonyelwa i-polio kunye ne hepatitis B which is why we have been left dumbfounded by all these self-proclaimed medical experts manufacturing lies and misinformation about the vaccine.

The vaccines are safe and effective so we need everyone to come forward and get the jab. The sooner we all do that, the sooner we will go back to some semblance of normal. We have noted that some big companies like Discovery and Sanlam and the business chamber here in the Metro have backed the no jab, no job policy.

Ladies and gentlemen, it should not come to the point of having people choose between the jab and getting a job. But we remain hopeful that sanity will prevail and people will be vaccinated against the virus.

Xa ndizohlala phantsi, siyabacela abantu noba sebeyifumene vaccine baqhubeleke nokunxiba masks, bathi gqolo ukuhlamba izandla ngamanzi anesepha okanye basebenzise sanitiser kwaye bangasondeli ebantwini kuba esisifo sihamba xa singazensi kakuhle ezizinto zilula zintathu.

These non-pharmaceutical protocols have saved millions of lives and will continue saving many more until we finally throw COVID-19 in the dustbin of history.

We have not won this war yet, but the decrease in new and active cases, is encouraging. It also reflects the deep commitment by this government of the people, to hold hands with private sector, civil society and our social partners, in defence of the communities of our beautiful EC Province.

Let's all stay safe and continue to exact more pressure on this pandemic. Its retreating and certainly it shall fall.

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