



Community Services and Health Mayco member Zahid Badroodien Picture: African News Agency (ANA)

Questions over 'lack of medical help' for homeless people

By Staff Writer Jun 2, 2020

Cape Town – The Community Chest has decried an alleged lack of help for homeless people who it said needed urgent medical assistance after contracting Covid-19.

The organisation has been housing 151 homeless people, who had been dropped off at Culemborg from Strandfontein, since May 25.

Community Chest said 151 people were tested for Covid-19 last week by a private health agency in a partnership initiative between the Homeless Action Committee and Epicentre, a private Covid-19 medical-testing service.

They said two people who previously stayed at the Strandfontein site had tested positive for Covid-19.

“The results were made known to residents in private disclosures from 11am onwards, and the two persons who tested positive were immediately placed into isolation on a separate floor in the building by 11.30am.

“At about the same time, we also informed the provincial Covid-19 health authorities at 12.11pm who arranged isolation beds for the two persons at Somerset Hospital.

“While isolation was approved by the Health Department by about 2pm on Saturday, we were still waiting by 10pm on an ambulance to be sent in order to safely transport the two infected persons to Somerset Hospital.

“We eventually had to call the SAPS, in the absence of any ambulance reaction, to fetch him. SAPS indicated they would transport him to Somerset Hospital,” they said.

Provincial Emergency Medical Services spokesperson Deanna Bessick said a call was received, but it was much later.

“We can confirm that the Western Cape Government Health’s Emergency Medical Services received and logged a call regarding the Community Chest building incident on Saturday, May 30. According to the documented notes, the call came in at 11pm.

“The call taker was advised that there were two patients who required assistance, and that one of the patients was a mental health patient who was traumatised at the time.

“The call taker advised the caller that the SAPS would have to respond to the incident before an ambulance and EMS officials could be dispatched, which is according to protocol. An ambulance arrived at the premises at 11.42am on Sunday morning and transported the patient to an isolation facility,” she said.

Community Services and Health Mayco member Zahid Badroodien said those identified by the Homeless Action Committee as close contacts of the case linked to Strandfontein were accommodated in a quarantine and isolation site, and none of them tested positive.

“There were, however, three persons who were meant to be quarantined, but who jumped off the bus transporting the group to the quarantine facility and joined the group under the bridge instead.

“It is impossible and incorrect to assume that the two cases that are now being reported contracted the virus from Strandfontein as they had left the facility just under a week earlier, and their exposure could have come from anywhere as they had exposed themselves to these risks,” he said.

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