



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

MEDIA STATEMENT

Date: 30 April 2018

SUBJECT: RESPONSES TO THE DAILY MAVERICKS'S MEDIA ENQUIRY

ENQUIRY 1:

Please confirm that the HOD has informed Red Cross AMS that Limpopo DOH has rescinded the reinstatement of Red Cross AMS for Aeromedical EMS services in the province, a service which was due to recommence on Tuesday, May 1, 2018.

Response:

Yes it's correct;

ENQUIRY 2:

Please confirm the reasons as well as who decided that this reinstatement be rescinded.

Response:

At a meeting held on the 20th April 2018 between the Department of Health: Limpopo Province and the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer (National Treasury), a decision was taken that National Treasury shall engage Red Cross and Buthelezi HEMS to resolve the issues of contract commencement date for Red Cross, as well as the contract end date for Buthelezi HEMS. This was done in the interest of responsible public spending. A decision was taken that Limpopo Department of Health shall rescind a letter of reinstatement until the National Treasury has finalized the engagements,

Without the intervention of the National Treasury; Limpopo Department of Health was poised to having two contracts running for the same service at the same time. (This would result in fruitless expenditure (Irresponsible Public Spending)).

ENQUIRY 3 AND 4:

3. Can you confirm that the Limpopo DOH obtained legal opinion on whether such a step would be in contravention of the court order made by the Supreme Court of Appeal on 10 November 2018?
4. Did the legal opinion tell the Limpopo DOH that it was within its legal rights to rescind the reinstatement?



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Response: In line with the above response ON ENQUIRY NO: 2 above; the National Treasury shouldered the responsibility of negotiations between the two parties (Red Cross and Buthelezi HEMS), a legal opinion if needed shall be based on the outcomes of the negotiations.

ENQUIRY 5:

In documentation we have had sight of you have referred all queries related to this to National Treasury, please confirm why this is the case, given that this decision has been taken at a provincial level?

Response: It is incorrect to assume that the decision was taken at a provincial level; in reference to response in Enquiry No 2 above; the decision was taken at a National Level.

ENQUIRY 6: PLEASE CONFIRM THE FOLLOWING:

- a. On 14 March 2018 Dr Kgaphole (HOD) wrote a letter to Red Cross, reinstating aero medical services in line with RT79 from April 1, this letter was emailed on 16 March.

Response:

Yes it's correct;

- b. Please confirm that the HOD was cc-ed in an email from Philip Erasmus to National Treasury giving an assurance to reinstate the services as soon as possible despite being given only two weeks' notice?

Response:

It is not the department's practice to cc the HOD, on communication with service providers.

- c. Please confirm that the HOD was cc-ed in an email from National Treasury (Edward Lamola) 27 March 2018, asking when exactly Red Cross would be in a position to continue its duties in Limpopo in line with RT 79.

Response:

It is not the department's practice to cc the HOD, on communication with service providers.

- d. Please confirm that the HOD was cc-ed in an email from Philips Erasmus to Edward Lamola on 27 March 2018, indicating that they had a telephonic discussion and it was confirmed that due to the short notice the service would be re-instated on 1 May 1018.



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Response:

It is not the department's practice to cc the HOD, on communication with service providers.

- e. Please confirm that the HOD was cc-ed in a follow-up email from Philip Erasmus to Edward Lamola, again confirming that the Red Cross was on track to re-instate services on 1 May 2018, after the short notice from Limpopo on 16 March to recommence services.

Response:

It is not the department's practice to cc the HOD, on communication with service providers.

ENQUIRY 7:

Please can the HOD explain why there was no further communication from his office on this matter despite the various emails between AMS and Treasury?

Response: The question is not specific; we would need more than just a quote to respond appropriately. We are not privy to the said meetings and their contents; responding would equate to pre-empting on and assuming the content of the quoted engagements.

ENQUIRY 8:

Please confirm that you are aware of the telephone conversation between Edward Lamola, your EMS head Philip Kruger and AMS' Philip Erasmus, agreeing that the province works in calendar months and the AMS service would commence on 1 May 2018?

Response: The HOD does not work in isolation from his management team; once a resolution is passed or procurement is approved all communication with service providers is delegated to the responsible management team to handle matters relating to each service provider. Red Cross is treated the same like all other service providers i.e. All service providers who handle hospital catering delivering vegetables or delivering stationery are at the same level with Red Cross. No preferential treatment.

ENQUIRY 9: Can the HOD confirm whether and when has given the current operator HALO/Buthelizi HEMS notice that Red Cross AMS will be re-instated. If possible please provide relevant evidence.



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Response: It is not the departmental practice to inform the outgoing service provider of the details of the incoming service provider. Communication of contract start and end dates are done in isolation of each service provider.

ENQUIRY 10:

The HOD has been placed under political pressure to ensure that companies of which Mr Thapelo Buthelezi is a director receive contracts from the Limpopo DoH. Please comment on your actions in this regard.

Response: The above claims are incorrect and thus disputed as pure fabrications

ENQUIRY 11 AND 12

11. Is the Limpopo DoH aware that two of the directors of Halo Aviation (Mark McConnell and Rob Siegrist) are police employees?
12. Does the Limpopo DoH have any other contracts with companies of which Mr Thapelo Buthelezi is a director?

Response: The department shall need more than just names to verify the correctness of the stated claims.

ENQUIRY 13:

We have information that Buthelezi EMS has purchased at least 22 road ambulances with the understanding that he will be given an IFT contract from Limpopo. Please confirm that Buthelezi EMS was considered for a contract for IFT in Limpopo? Please give details.

RESPONSE:

The Limpopo Department of Health does not have any plans of outsourcing inter facility transfers services. If anything, the department is actually far ahead in insourcing all its services which can be provided in-house like cleaning and catering for our patients. We are finalizing the laundry services to be insources now we can't start to outsource inter facility transfer against government policy of insourcing



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ENQUIRY 14:

Please confirm that an amount of money is currently in the budget which is earmarked for Buthelezi EMS services?

RESPONSE:

There is no money earmarked or quarantined for any service provider. As a department we only set aside funds for the rendering of all services related to our establishment as the department. For instance there are funds set aside for an array of medical services; e.g for patient food, service of medical equipment, etc. for effective running of the department.

ENQUIRY 15:

Have any paramedics working on the HALO/HEMS service been suspended or investigated? Please give details?

Response:

Limpopo Department of Health does not have any contract with individual paramedics working for HALO/HEMS. We believe the above question should be referred to HALO/HEMS as the employer.

ENQUIRY 16:

Does the Limpopo DOH regularly inspect the HALO/HEMS helicopter base in Polokwane? If you have, please give details? If not, please explain why not.

Response:

Since the inception of an aero medical service in Limpopo, EMS has placed provincial staff at the base, working in collaboration with the service providers, to ensure a quality service.

ENQUIRY 17:

Can you confirm that the HALO/HEMS helicopter bases will not pass CAA inspection regarding the specifications for an emergency aeromedical base?

Response:

Question to be referred to the Civil Aviation Authority.



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ENQUIRY 18:

Are you aware that HALO/HEMS service has in the past failed to pay various fees for the hangar and have for periods been barred from accessing their base until invoices are paid? Is the Department happy with this state of affairs?

RESPONSE:

The renting of a hanger is an agreement between HALO/HEMS and an external party. Limpopo Health is not aware of any disputes between these parties.

ENQUIRY 19:

Has the Limpopo DOH received any legal threats from HALO/HEMS since they served them with the termination of their month-to-month contract on 23 February (as communicated by yourselves in an email to Spotlight)?

RESPONSE:

There is no legal threats received by the department from HALO/HEMS

ENQUIRY 20:

Has the Limpopo DOH received complaints regarding the services of HALO/HEMS? Please give details?

RESPONSE:

As the department, we have not received any complaints regarding services of HALO/HEMS

ENQUIRY 21:

Please share the inflight death rates for the aeromedical service for the past three years.

Response:

Inflight death rates are not routinely collected and forms part of individual patient records.

ENQUIRY 22:

Please share details on what contingency plans HALO/HEMS put in place when the helicopter is in for maintenance or broken? Are their periods when there is no aircraft operating?

RESPONSE:

In instances where there are downtimes due to maintenance or weather, the responsibility remains with the Department of Health, for patient care and transportation, which may include ground transportation.



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ENQUIRY 23:

How does the Limpopo DOH assess calls to the call centre and how these cases are handled by the aeromedical service provider?

Response:

All emergency related calls in Limpopo are channeled through Department of Health's EMS call centres. The Department has a team of full time Paramedics responsible for screening and authorizing all calls, prior to handing these to the service provider. The Department further has dedicated personnel working with the service provider, ensuring adequate level of care.

End

Issued by Department of Health

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