

Signs that Western Cape is over its Covid-19 peak

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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There are early signs that the Western Cape may have crested the Covid-19 curve, even though restrictions have been eased and more economic activity has resumed.



Dr Keith Cloete

“The general trends show that our cases, our mortality and our hospitalisation data are showing clear signs of a sustained plateauing,” Dr Keith Cloete, Western Cape Health Department head, said in a digital press conference.

There is more evidence through genome sequencing the early cases of infection that the virus may have taken hold in the Western Cape before other parts of the country, hence the earlier peak. Cloete said that the genomes in early cases were the same as those found in the Netherlands and Australia, among others, so the virus was probably imported with tourists.

“ Western Cape Government Digicon on the province’s [#COVID19](#) response 💎💎 [@westerncapegov](#)
<https://t.co/6EEtxLKrHy>— Premier Alan Winde (@alanwinde) [July 29, 2020](#) ”

In May, the province had around half of all Covid-19 cases, and around 65% of all deaths, but now it accounts for around 20% of all infections, although a surge in infections in other provinces, Gauteng in particular, may also be partially responsible for this.

Cloete said there the data was showing that there was a reduction in burden on healthcare resources, which indicated a drop in infections. This was most marked in hotspot areas such as Khayelitsha and Klipfontein.

He said it was interesting to see that the virus was showing different patterns of behaviour, even within the districts of the province that were in close proximity to each other. In addition, while most of the Cape metro was showing signs of easing, the graphs for districts further afield, such as George and Knysna, were showing upward movement. Again, Cloete said, even though these two towns were near each other the trajectories of the virus weren't happening in the same way.

Test demand declining

Tests in the Western Cape peaked in June, since then both private and public healthcare testing has seen a decline, not because of a change in regimen, but because of a reduction in demand for tests. The testing strategy in the Western Cape has not been to test everybody, but instead, those admitted to a health facility, over a certain age, with comorbidities, and healthcare workers. Using healthcare workers as a sub group, he said that the same declining numbers have been reported as with the larger testing sample.

While testing peaked at 40% for test positivity rate, this has now declined to less than 30%. "This means that around one in every three persons tested is positive," he said.

Cloete made it clear that even though the data looked promised that the Western Cape was over the worst of it, there was always the danger of a second and third peak as the economy opened further and people became less vigilant. He said the department's strategy now was the reinforce behaviour protocols such as wearing masks, social distancing and hand sanitising.

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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