

DISTRICT-BASED APPROACH WON'T CONTAIN COVID-19 IN WC – UWC VIROLOGIST

Health Minister Zweli Mkhize said last week government has prepared a district-based plan to its COVID-19 response moving away from a one-size-fits-all method.



Shoppers on 2 May 2020 queue at a Mr Price store at Canal Walk Shopping Centre in Cape Town. Picture: Jarita Kassen/EWN.

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CAPE TOWN - A University of the Western Cape (UWC) virologist believes a district-based approach will not contain the spread of the coronavirus in the Western Cape.

Last week, Health Minister [Zweli Mkhize \(https://ewn.co.za/Topic/Zweli-Mkhize\)](https://ewn.co.za/Topic/Zweli-Mkhize) said government had prepared a district-based plan to its [COVID-19 \(https://ewn.co.za/topic/coronavirus\)](https://ewn.co.za/topic/coronavirus) response moving away from a one-size-fits-all method.

Director of research development at the university Burtram Fielding said people who ignored social distancing rules were largely to blame for the province's high infection load.

"It's not really a hard lockdown. How do you restrict certain areas if you have one area in the Western Cape under level four and the other one under level 5, how do you restrict movement of people between those areas?"

Fielding said the number of COVID-19 cases were under-reported: "The report is based on how we're doing testing. I'm convinced from previous coronavirus outbreaks that you will need a large scale testing. Many with mild symptoms will never be tested."

As government considers where lockdown restrictions will be further relaxed or re-tightened, the country has recorded its biggest daily coronavirus cases.

The health department said 15,515 cases have been registered since the outbreak a little over two months ago.

The Western Cape remains the biggest concern as it accounts for 76% of new cases.
For official information about COVID-19 from the Department of Health, please visit [https://sacoronavirus.co.za \(https://sacoronavirus.co.za\)](https://sacoronavirus.co.za)

Three more people have also died pushing the national toll to 264.

Meanwhile, Western Cape Premier Alan Winde said he preferred that the entire province be lowered to level three of the lockdown and for government not to take the district approach.

COVID19 hotspots will likely remain under level four or worse, could return to level five.

Winde said at the president's coordinating council over the weekend he put his position on the table to allow the whole province to go down to level three and not have one town on level four and others on different levels.

He added that this approach isn't necessary because the province did have a hotspot strategy in place.

But if the national government does indeed decide to go for the district approach, Winde said this needed to be controlled by enforcement agencies.

This is because in one district a business might be allowed to open and not in another, he said this would be confusing: "The police and the military will have to control a lot of people and this will cause a lot of confusion and will be difficult to regulate."

Winde said that he had made mention that the province does have a medical response in place, with sufficient hospital beds, personal protective equipment and other essentials that were needed.

For official information about COVID-19 from the Department of Health, please [click here \(https://sacoronavirus.co.za/\)](https://sacoronavirus.co.za/).

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