

Public urged to engage with NHI Bill

Cabinet has called on members of the public to engage the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill, which is currently before Parliament.



The Bill was released earlier this month by Parliament, paving the way for public participation and engagement on it.

“Once it is passed into law, the Bill will give effect to universal access to healthcare to all citizens in our country, irrespective of their socio-economic background. This right is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa,” Minister in the Presidency, Jackson Mthembu said.

He was on Thursday briefing members of media on the outcomes of the Cabinet meeting that was held on Wednesday in Cape Town.

“Cabinet remains confident that the National Health Insurance will be implemented in a phased and responsible manner. An implementation plan will be developed and published once the bill is passed into law,” Mthembu said.

The bill was signed off by Health Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize and adopted by Cabinet in July.

Through the NHI, government seeks to fulfil its constitutional obligation to provide quality universal healthcare for all, as envisaged in Section 27 of the Constitution and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Under the NHI, South African citizens, permanent residents, refugees, inmates, designated foreign nationals and all children will receive primary healthcare.

Primary healthcare centres such as clinics or general practitioners will be the first point of access to healthcare. Access to healthcare services will be free at point of care.

The NHI aims to follow in the footsteps of countries such as Britain and Japan, which have also implemented their own equivalent.

Under the Bill, medical aid schemes will gradually be phased out until they, as the main source of primary healthcare, ultimately cease to exist.

Medical aids will thus only be able to provide what is called complimentary cover. Complimentary cover will provide services that are not listed under the NHI such as cosmetic surgeries.

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