

Premier Alan Winde pays lip service to gender-based violence

 By [Katja Hamilton](#)

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Following Premier Winde's SOPA 2022 debate held yesterday, leaders of the opposition went for the jugular.



Source: [Pexels](#)

They were up in arms at Winde's move to launch a Violence Prevention Unit within the Western Cape Department of Health.

"How can Winde protect women from gender-based violence, when he doesn't hold sexual predators within his own department accountable?" they said.

Many are shocked at the victims who have come forward to expose the sexual harassment that is happening within the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the government's failure to hold the sexual predators accountable.

This refers in particular to the sexual misconduct allegations against community safety MEC Albert Fritz who is a member of the DA, and against an alleged two other MPs. The suspended MEC Fritz allegedly groomed young women in his office.

He was suspended last month, after complainants came forward with affidavits. The caucus demanded to know whether

Albert Fritz was still an MP and being paid.

Winde's independent investigation with Advocate Jennifer Williams is underway.

What is the Violence Prevention Unit?

That Winde did not provide details of the Violence Prevention Unit roll-out, explain how gender-based violence would form part of that roll out, nor what budget would be allocated to the unit came under scathing review.

"Premier Winde's GBV implementation plan is nonsense; it's nothing but hot air. We want to know how much he is contributing to GBV and femicide. Where is the plan to address this?" Rachel Windvogel, member of the African National Congress said.

She also questioned why the unit was not allocated to the Department of Social Development, or to the Department of Community Safety. This was all the more pertinent against the backdrop of Winde announcing at SOPA 2022 that he had renamed the division: Department of Police Oversight and Community Safety in the Western Cape.

Winde said National Government had only allotted Provincial government oversight capabilities in policing.



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"You can make so many proposals and change the department names but you can't bring the violence and crime under control. You will be fighting a losing battle," Windvogel said to Winde when it was her time to speak. We have a serious problem of GBV and femicide in this province. Perpetrators are still at large. We call on the police to speed up investigations and to bring perpetrators to boot."

Windvogel bulleted a long list of women who had been murdered in the province in the last two weeks.

"There's no mention of any of these cases in SOPA," she said.

"Either the premier doesn't appreciate the severity of the scourge of gender-based violence and femicide or he simply does not care because some of his cabinet members are alleged perpetrators. Three senior officials in his cabinet remain in their jobs while facing serious charges of sexual misconduct. The ANC demands are clear: Remove them from your Cabinet."

Is it fair to task a burdened Health Department with the mission of violence prevention?

But while the Opposition tore Winde's proposals apart, his idea to link the Violence Prevention Unit with the Health Department may just be a stroke of genius .

At SOPA 2022 he said he would be tapping into the health department's tools and resources that have enabled it to provide a world-class response to the pandemic. He said he would be tapping into the infrastructure of contact tracing, the digital tools to map out geographic crime hot spots. Plus he would have access to a centralised digital database.

"Our Health Department tracks data that can help us better understand violence, including alcohol-related harms, gender-based violence or children at risk of violence, to name a few," Winde said.

"This analysis is possible because our health department was the first in the country to go digital, including 265 primary

healthcare centres, 181 mobile posts, 51 acute and specialised hospitals, 28 intermediate care facilities, 49 EMS stations and 17 forensic pathology laboratories," he said.

Winde didn't provide further details.

That emergency hospital units are the first point of contact for rape victims, Winde's system could potentially be instrumental in collating data from J88 forms and in providing feedback on times, dates and locations of rapes. J88 is a legal document that is completed by a medical doctor or registered nurse in hospital, documenting injuries sustained by the victim in any circumstance where a legal investigation is to follow.

It may be the only objective information available in a legal case.

This may be the key to increasing convictions of perpetrators.

But this is mere speculation at this stage.

Furthermore, if Winde intends to team the Violence Prevention Unit with the Western Cape's Department of Police Oversight and Community Safety, this would allow Winde to provide targeted deployment of police in rape hotspots as a major-rape prevention tool. providing a formidable partnership in the fight against crime in the Western Cape.

But again this is speculation.

Only time will reveal the role the Violence Prevention Unit will play in the province and its ability and capacity to bring down crime statistics in the Western Cape. I hope - for all the women impacted by GBV - that the Violence Prevention Unit doesn't land up being a mere reputational-management exercise to garner trust from a public disheartened by the GBV crimes hiding in plain sight in the Provincial Government.

Will citizens be detained in hospital?

Furthermore, pairing the digital capabilities of the Health Department with the new Violence Prevention Unit does not bode well if National Government goes ahead with its plan to detain Covid-19 symptomatic patients in hospitals against their will.

Health experts have called on the government to explain the intent behind, and reasons for, [a new set of Covid-19 regulations](#) issued and gazetted earlier this month.

The regulations include measures that will allow for the forced isolation of symptomatic patients who refuse treatment and admission at a health facility, including a provision that they can be held for 48 hours at such a facility before a warrant is obtained to extend their isolation period.

But Winde didn't mention the matter.

Is the role of the Social Department being reconfigured?

Windvogel continued to question the Premier at the SOPA 2022 debate on the reasons the Violence Prevention Unit had not been assigned to the Department of Social Development. "I think the Premier is confused because he says he is moving the Violence Prevention Unit to Health; unless he thinks the MEC of Social Development is not doing a good job? "

When it was her turn to speak, The Minister of Social Development, Lindiwe Zulu revealed she was a survivor of sexual abuse and encouraged others in the same position to speak up against their perpetrators.

"GBV violence remains a significant issue in the country and province, she said. "More women were reportedly raped between April and June last year during the hard lockdown when sex-related crimes increased by 74%. This factors

interpersonal violence, limited access to economic opportunities resulting in poverty and unemployment, alcohol abuse and patriarchal gender norms that contribute to GBV. This requires a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach to address these drivers of gender-based violence.

"Every woman or child who falls victim to violence is one too many."

ABOUT KATJA HAMILTON

Katja is the Finance, Property and Healthcare Editor at Bizcommunity.

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