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Op Die Berg Community providing staff protection from Cape storm



Nine healthcare workers from the Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness were left stranded at Op Die Berg Clinic after severe flooding caused by the storm that battered the Cape Winelands on Monday, 11 May 2026. The team, who provided healthcare services to the local community, was unable to return home as roads became unsafe and inaccessible.

The experience proved traumatic for the healthcare workers, but the Op Die Berg community quickly stepped in to ensure their safety and wellbeing during the crisis.

With support from community members, Emergency Medical Services personnel, and RoadMac teams, the stranded staff members were safely reunited with their

families on Wednesday, 13 May 2026. Special recognition was given to Reverend Albie Steenkamp of the Op Die Berg Dutch Reformed Church, who immediately opened his home to assist the healthcare workers. Together with his wife, Ilse Steenkamp, the couple welcomed the team and ensured they felt safe, cared for, and supported throughout the ordeal. Rev Steenkamp also coordinated accommodation for the workers at the Skurweberg Senior Secondary School hostel.

“I reached out to the community for donations. We received various items, and someone even prepared fish and chips for them,” said Rev Steenkamp. “It really was a pleasure serving them. I am new on the Ceres Hospital Board, so it only made sense for us and the community to

help. It was a privilege to care for our ‘medical children’ who serve daily in the clinic and on farms.” Despite communication difficulties caused by the storm, community members worked together to ensure families were informed about the wellbeing of their loved ones. In addition to accommodation and meals, the healthcare workers were treated to breakfast at a local restaurant and given opportunities to charge their phones while waiting for conditions to improve.

Once it was deemed safe to travel, the team was escorted out of the area on 13 May 2026, bringing a difficult chapter to a safe and heartwarming conclusion.

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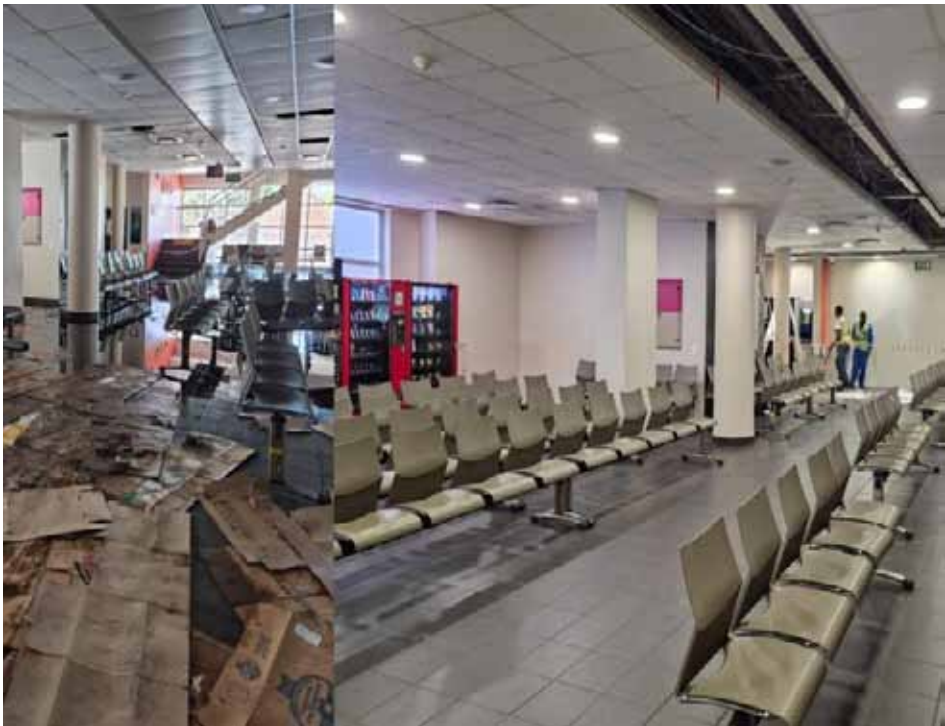
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Paarl Hospital restoration nears completion months ahead of schedule



The restoration of Paarl Hospital following the devastating fire in January 2026 is now nearing completion, with major infrastructure repairs completed and the phased return of services to restored areas well underway. The project is progressing well ahead of the initially anticipated 12-month timeline, with key restoration work completed in just six months.

Mireille Wenger, Western Cape Minister of Health and Wellness, said the progress made over the past six months reflected the extraordinary commitment of healthcare teams who worked tirelessly to ensure continuity of care while restoration work was undertaken.

“When the fire broke out in January, the initial expectation was that restoration could take up to 12 months. Instead, through a tremendous effort from our teams, major restoration work has been completed in just six months and services are already returning to repaired areas of the hospital,” said Minister Wenger.

“This is an extraordinary achievement. I want to particularly thank the Department’s Infrastructure team, hospital management, frontline healthcare workers, contractors

and support teams whose dedication, professionalism and resilience made this progress possible. Their efforts ensured that Paarl Hospital continued to serve its community while repairs were undertaken at pace.”

The Western Cape Government made R67 million available to support the restoration and strengthening of Paarl Hospital following the fire.

All major infrastructure work has now been completed, and most equipment and furniture have already been delivered and installed. While some specialist medical equipment is still expected to arrive over the coming months, these timelines were anticipated and incorporated into the broader restoration plan.

A number of outpatient and specialist services have already moved back into the restored areas of the hospital, with the remaining specialist services expected to return by the first week of June 2026.

“This work has always been about more than repairing a building. It is about restoring access to care and support the health and dignity of every person who depends on Paarl Hospital.

Stellenbosch University Duo Awarded Prestigious Bongani Mayosi Scholarship



STELLENBOSCH – Two Stellenbosch University (SU) clinician-scientists have been named as the recipients of the prestigious Professor Bongani Mayosi Netcare Scholarship, a high-honor award designed to bolster medical research in South Africa.

Dr. Kessendri Reddy, a clinical microbiologist, and Dr. Kamlin Ekambaram, an emergency medicine specialist, will each receive three years of full-time funding to complete their PhD research. The scholarship honors the late Professor Bongani Mayosi, a globally renowned cardiologist and UCT dean who championed healthcare equity.

Dr. Reddy’s research addresses the “silent pandemic” of antibiotic resistance, an issue she says disproportionately affects sub-Saharan Africa. Her work focuses on optimizing antimicrobial use in hospitals to preserve life-saving drugs for the future.

“Time is arguably the scarcest resource for clinicians who are also expected to contribute academically,” Reddy said, describing the award as “life-changing.”

Sharing the honors is Dr. Ekambaram, whose work bridges the gap between medicine and engineering. Based in SU’s Faculty of Engineering, Ekambaram is developing artificial intelligence (AI) models to assist non-specialists in interpreting bedside cardiac ultrasounds.

“AI-assisted systems have the potential to extend expertise beyond specialists and improve care for many more patients simultaneously,” said Ekambaram, who previously served at Port Shepstone Regional Hospital.

The scholarship aims to create a new generation of medical leaders, a goal that both recipients say aligns deeply with the legacy of their late mentor and inspiration, Professor Mayosi.

Option 2: Feature/Human Interest Style
Best for: Weekend supplements, university magazines, or community papers.

Headline: The Gift of Time: Two Local Doctors Paving the Way for Healthcare Innovation

For a busy clinician, time is often the one thing they cannot prescribe. But for Dr. Kessendri Reddy and Dr. Kamlin Ekambaram, a

prestigious new scholarship has granted them exactly that: three years to change the face of South African medicine.

The two Stellenbosch University researchers were recently announced as the latest recipients of the Professor Bongani Mayosi Netcare Scholarship. The award doesn’t just fund a degree; it honors a legacy of excellence and humility left behind by the late Professor Mayosi.

Fighting the Superbugs
Dr. Reddy, a senior lecturer and pathologist, is taking on one of global health’s biggest threats—antibiotic resistance. Her PhD aims to refine how we use medicine in wards to stop the spread of untreatable infections. “This work is about conserving a precious resource,” Reddy explains.

AI on the Frontlines
Meanwhile, Dr. Ekambaram is using his experience in high-pressure emergency departments to bring tech to the bedside. By using AI to help interpret ultrasounds, he hopes to empower rural doctors who lack access to specialist equipment. “In emergency medicine, you often help one patient at a time,” says Ekambaram. “This work allows us to help many more.”

Both doctors view the award as a full-circle moment. For Ekambaram, who was mentored by Mayosi at UCT, the scholarship is deeply personal. “I believe this work would have made him proud,” he said.

Option 3: Professional/Academic Brief
Best for: A “News in Brief” column or a professional medical newsletter. SU Clinicians Secure Major PhD Funding Stellenbosch University’s Dr. Kessendri Reddy and Dr. Kamlin Ekambaram have been awarded the Professor Bongani Mayosi Netcare Scholarship for 2026. The scholarship provides three years of full-time support for clinician-scientists to pursue high-impact research.

Dr. Reddy will focus on antimicrobial stewardship and infection control to combat antibiotic resistance in sub-Saharan Africa. Dr. Ekambaram, working through the Faculty of Engineering, will develop AI-driven machine learning models to improve the accuracy of bedside cardiac ultrasounds in resource-limited settings. Both recipients noted that the award provides the “rare opportunity” to focus exclusively on research that honors the legacy



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GROWING AWARENESS OF CAFFEINE SENSITIVITY DRIVES SHIFT IN CONSUMPTION HABITS

Caffeine remains the world’s most widely consumed stimulant and is found in coffee, tea, chocolate, energy drinks and even certain medications. Yet individuals respond to it very differently. Caffeine sensitivity is also different from a caffeine allergy, which is rare and involves an immune system reaction rather than difficulty tolerating caffeine’s stimulant effects.

About 40% of people are fast metabolisers, meaning they break caffeine down quickly and it doesn’t stay in their system for long. Around 50% are intermediate metabolisers, sitting somewhere in the middle in terms of both how strongly and how long they feel its effects. The remaining 10% are slow metabolisers, which means caffeine stays in their system longer and even small amounts can lead to stronger or more prolonged effects, such as jitteriness, rapid breathing, nausea and/or insomnia.

Because caffeine affects the central nervous system, its impact can vary significantly from person to person, influencing both physical and psychological well-being.

Some women may also become more sensitive to caffeine during perimenopause and menopause due to hormonal changes affecting sleep and caffeine metabolism. Research published by Mayo Clinic linked caffeine intake to more bothersome menopausal symptoms, including hot flashes and night sweats. Caffeine sensitivity may also increase with age due to slower metabolism, changes in sleep patterns and other age-related physiological changes. The impact of caffeine on sleep

Against this backdrop, more attention is being paid to the timing of caffeine consumption, particularly its effect on sleep.

“Caffeine blocks adenosine, a chemical that helps the body wind down for sleep, keeping the brain alert when it should be preparing for rest,” explains Adele du Toit, spokesperson for the South African Rooibos Council (SARC).

She says this growing awareness is influencing consumer behaviour, with many people choosing to enjoy caffeinated beverages earlier in the day and switching to caffeine-free alternatives later in the afternoon and evening. A shift toward evening wellness rituals

Global beverage trend data reflects this shift, with research from Euromonitor International and Mintel showing growth in herbal and caffeine-free tea categories, driven partly by consumer interest in relaxation and better sleep.

“People often underestimate how much caffeine

they’re consuming, because it’s hidden in so many products,” du Toit adds. “By becoming more aware of these sources, it becomes easier to make small, practical changes – like switching to caffeine-free beverages later in the day.”

Health authorities generally consider up to 400 mg of caffeine per day safe for most adults, but individual tolerance varies significantly. For those with heightened sensitivity, even small amounts may disrupt sleep or trigger discomfort.

Balance rather than elimination

The concept of an “evening tea ritual” is gaining traction as part of a broader wellness movement focused on sleep health and mindful consumption. Naturally caffeine-free options like Rooibos are increasingly being used to replace late-day stimulants, helping to create a clearer boundary between daytime productivity and evening relaxation.

Beyond being caffeine-free, Rooibos has also attracted growing interest for its potential calming and stress-support benefits. As part of an evening routine, many consumers turn to Rooibos as a comforting way to unwind. Emerging research has explored Rooibos’ possible role in supporting the body’s stress response, with findings suggesting that certain compounds may help regulate cortisol, a hormone linked to stress. While individual experiences vary, some consumers also report better sleep quality when incorporating Rooibos into their evening rituals, making it an increasingly popular choice for those seeking a more restful transition into the night.

This aligns with a broader trend underscoring the importance of quality sleep for both physical and mental health. Poor sleep has been linked to reduced cognitive performance, increased stress levels and a range of long-term health risks. As a result, reducing caffeine intake – particularly in the hours before bedtime – is increasingly seen as a practical way to support better sleep.

Du Toit believes the shift reflects a deeper change in consumer behaviour.

It’s not about avoiding caffeine entirely or comparing beverages. It’s about balance – enjoying your morning coffee or tea and then making a conscious choice to wind down in the afternoon and evening with a herbal infusion.

“As more people become aware of how their bodies respond to caffeine, we’re seeing a clear move toward more intentional, health-conscious daily rituals.



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Vier die Buitengewone by die 3de Winelands Autumn Expo



Die opgewondenheid is amper tasbaar, regoor die Kaapse Wynlande soos Worcester gereed maak om duisende besoekers op 29 en 30 Mei 2026 by Montana Hoërskool vir die 3de Winelands Autumn Expo te verwelkom.

En die weer kon nie meer perfek wees nie. Die voorspelling belowe perfekte herfsweer, met net n ligte windjie, ’n wolkie hier en daar en pragtige goue sonskyn. Hierdie is die soort weer wat mense se gemoed lig, nader aan mekaar bring en ons herinner waarom herfs in die Wynlande so besonders is. Ná die storms wat ons gemeenskappe die afgelope weke moes trotseer, bied die Expo ’n besondere geleentheid om ons deursettingsvermoë te vier, ons gemeenskapsbande te versterk en weer die eenvoudige vreugde van saam kuier te herontdek.

Vanjaar se Expo belooft nóg meer vermaak, nóg meer om te proe en nóg meer ervarings vir die hele gesin. Besoekers kan uitsien na vermaak van naby en ver — van die beproefde ritmes van Klipwerf, New Strings Dance Band en Just Friends, tot vars nuwe klanke van Jakkals Vibes en Robbie Wessels, terwyl kunstenaars soos Belinda Davids en Juan Boucher stergehalte van regoor Suid-Afrika en verder bring. Die

program sluit ook optredes van Spoegwolf, Millennium, Refentse en vele meer kunstenaars oor die twee dae in.

Gesinne kan ontspan met toegewyde kindervermaak in ’n veilige speelarea wat nie net toesig bied nie, maar ook in ouderdomsgroepe verdeel is. Kinders onder 12 het gratis toegang, kaartjies vir volwassenes kos slegs R100 vir een dag of R180 vir altwee dae. Hierde pryse maak dat die Expo een van die mees bekostigbare grootskaalse gesinsgeleenthede in die land is.

Behalwe die musiek, kan besoekers meer as 100 stalletjies verken met alles van handgemaakte produkte, klere, dekor en juweliersware tot wyne, gourmet-lekkerte en unieke geskenke. Buitelug-entoesiaste kan kamptoerusting, braaitoerusting, sleepwaens, karavane en leefstyl-uitstallings bewonder, terwyl kosliefhebbers hulself kan bederf by die groot verskeidenheid kostrokkies en proe-ervarings regoor die terrein. En daar is gratis parkering op die perseel.

Bring jou familie, nooi jou vriende en kom kuier saam in Worcester vir ’n naweek waar ons weer saam kan proe, ervaar, ontdek en vier.

Cape Winelands Schools Celebrated Positive Behaviour Week Through Acts of Kindness



The Cape Winelands Education District recently celebrated Positive Behaviour Week under the theme, “Acts of Kindness”, encouraging learners and communities to spread kindness and compassion.

The initiative highlighted the importance of positive behaviour in schools and reminded learners that kindness towards others also created a sense of happiness and positivity within themselves. Schools across the district took part in activities aimed at promoting caring attitudes and community involvement.

One inspiring example came from talented young violinist Angeli de Bruyn, who volunteered her time in Van Wyksvlei at a project known as Kid’s Story through Ikaya la Themba. During the outreach programme, children listened to Bible stories and teachings before receiving warm meals.

The Cape Winelands Education District praised the efforts of young people who dedicated their time and hearts to meaningful initiatives that made a difference in the lives of others.

Special thanks were extended to the De Bruyn family for sharing their story and for setting an excellent example of kindness and service within the community.

Grade 6 Learners Attended Child Protection and Anti-Bullying Programme

Grade 6 learners recently had the opportunity to attend the Child Protection, Anti-Bullying and Kindness Programme hosted at the William Lloyd School Hall in collaboration with Cape Winelands District officials.

The programme focused on important issues affecting learners, including child safety, bullying prevention, kindness, respect and the importance of building positive relationships within schools and communities.

Learners were encouraged to stand together against bullying and to promote a culture of care, support and understanding among their peers.

The school expressed gratitude for initiatives such as these, which empowered learners with valuable knowledge and encouraged them to contribute towards creating a safer, kinder and more supportive school environment.



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