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INCREASE

New Covid-19 cases surpass June's peak

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THE number of Covid-19 cases recorded in the Western Cape recently has surpassed the number of cases experienced during the first peak, according to the head of the provincial health department, Dr Keith Cloete.

Cloete said: "The province as a whole continues to see a marked increase in cases, taking us well above levels previously seen in June. The increase in active cases in all districts represents an established second wave.

"Hospitalisations and deaths have increased sharply since mid-November."

Speaking during Premier Alan Winde's regular digicon, Cloete said: "The key message is that hospitalisations and proportion-positive (levels) are rapidly headed towards levels seen at the peak of the first wave. We must also be mindful that this time we do not have the protection of a lockdown or an alcohol ban."

Cloete said although the Garden Route had exceeded its first peak and there were early signs that the number of cases was stabilising, the Cape Wine-lands, Central Karoo and Overberg had also exceeded the maximum daily case numbers of the first peak. Meanwhile, the West Coast was also on an upward trend.

Winde said: "During the first wave of the pandemic in the rural areas of the province, our focus was on putting extra beds into our own facilities, which will act as legacy projects and which will expand the capacity of and improve the functioning of our hospitals in George, Hermanus, Worcester, Paarl and Vredendal beyond Covid-19 and into the future.

"Approximately 300 acute beds and 135 ICU beds have been added into our system this way. For the second wave, we will be taking this same approach in the metro region, so that the investment into health care that we make now remains in our own infrastructure and does not need to be closed down again at a later date."

Meanwhile, the South African Covid-19 Modelling Consortium has unveiled its new dashboard to enable the public to assess the Covid-19 risk level in any district in South Africa.

Spokesperson for the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, Sinenhlanhla Jimoh said: "This open access dashboard presents a subset of the metrics used to support the planning efforts of the government of South Africa.

"The public can use it to assess the Covid-19 risk level in any district in the country."