

Joint hearing into Life Esidimeni to be conducted

Justice and Correctional Services Minister Ronald Lamola has agreed to the National Prosecuting Authority's request that a joint hearing be conducted into the Life Esidimeni deaths

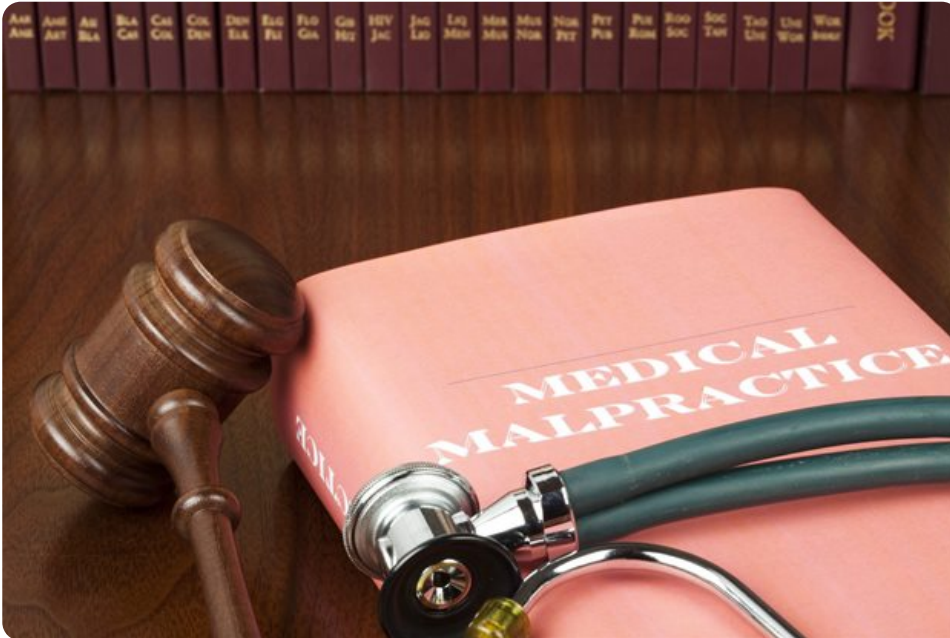


Image source: Getty Images

On 28 January 2020, Lamola requested the Judge President to designate a judge to preside over the Life Esidimeni inquest in the High Court in Pretoria.

NPA Gauteng spokesperson Phindi Mjonondwane said the Acting Director of Public Prosecutions: Gauteng Division (Pretoria), Advocate George Baloyi, took a decision to refer all Esidimeni matters to a joint inquest hearing on 3 September 2019.

“Subsequent to his decision and as per dictates of section 6(d) of the Inquest Act 58 of 1959, the National Director of Public Prosecutions, Advocate Shamila Batohi, submitted a request to Minister Lamola to approach the Judge President’s office to appoint a presiding officer to preside over the inquest,” Mjonondwane said.

In 2016, former Gauteng Health MEC Qedani Mahlangu was fingered as the leader of the project, under which mental healthcare patients, who were based at the Life Esidimeni healthcare facility, were moved to NGO facilities to cut costs.

The termination of the contract resulted in the deaths of over 140 patients, who died due to septicæmic hypothermia and in some instances, hunger.

“The NPA will await further guidance from the Judge President’s office in relation to the period, duration and presiding officer to be appointed to conduct the joint inquest hearing,” Mjonondwane said.

