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DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION SUPPORTS INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEATH OF LEARNER AT EQUAL EDUCATION CAMP

The Department of Basic Education is shocked and deeply saddened to learn of the passing of a grade 10 learner at an Equal Education Leadership Camp.

Fifteen (15) year old Avethandwa Nokhangela from Xolani High School in the Eastern Cape passed away in a drowning incident while taking part in an activity organised by the non-government organisation.

The provincial Department learnt of this incident when some members of the community raised their concerns following reports involving the death of a learner in the area. Members of Sea Rescue services and the police assisted the Department officials to piece together details of the incident.

The DBE supports MEC for Education in the Eastern Cape, Mr Fundile Gade, who has called for a full investigation into the circumstances that led to the death of the learner. The Department in the province received information from the South African Police Service about the incident after the body of the learner was recovered from one of the Buffalo Metro beaches. The delay by Equal Education in reporting the matter to the Provincial Education Department raises serious concerns.

In their letter (dated 1 May 2021) to Acting Eastern Cape Education Department HoD, Dr Soyisile Nuku, Equal Education state that they were in contact with the Department only in the afternoon on Friday. A thorough investigation into the incident is required to ensure that all the facts are established and that those found responsible must be held to account for the unnecessary loss of life.

The provincial Department has already sent officials to the school to arrange psychosocial support to learners and particularly those who attended the Equal Education event including those left behind at school, educators and the parents of the learner.

The Department has sent condolences to the bereaved family and friends including the school community where the child attended.

The Department has requested the SAPS to assist with the investigation and to consider a criminal case.

ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

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