



THE GOOD WAY FORWARD

FOR OUR TOWNS

**WESTERN CAPE TOWNS,
ON THE SAME STANDARD**



THE GOOD PARTY MANIFESTO:

**2026 WESTERN CAPE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

The Western Cape does not run on Cape Town alone. It runs on the wine pressed in Stellenbosch and Robertson, the fruit packed in Ceres and Grabouw, the grain milled out of the Swartland, the fish hauled in off Gansbaai and Saldanha, the whales that bring the world to Hermanus, the world-class road trip through the Garden Route, and the guest houses and cellar-door tastings that put "Cape Winelands" on a shelf in London and New York. The wealth this province exports, and the image it sells, is made in its towns. The people who live in those towns are, more often than not, the last to see any of it.

Every one of these towns has two sides, and the line between them is not new. It runs along the same long forgotten railway track, the same N-road, the same dry riverbed it has run along for a hundred years: the historic centre, whitewashed and jacaranda-lined, kept photogenic for the tourist route on one side; the township or the informal settlement, gravel roads and a single overworked clinic, on the other. Franschhoek has its wine tram and its "location." Hermanus has its cliff path and its Zwelihle. Plettenberg Bay has Robberg Peninsula, and Kwanokathula. The pattern repeats because it was built to repeat, town after town, the same apartheid geography, resurfaced for a tourism brochure.

In between harvests and sardine runs, towns whose entire economy is seasonal labour empty out into what these communities have long called the hunger months: no picking, no fishing, no packing, no wage, and a municipality with no plan for the gap.

Climate change is compounding that seasonal fragility, not easing it. Shifting rainfall, prolonged drought and increasingly erratic seasons are already cutting into harvest yields across the province's fruit, grain and wine-growing regions, and a growing season that starts later or ends earlier translates directly into fewer weeks of wage for a worker with no other income to fall back on. Along the coast, fishing communities face the same squeeze from a different direction: catches that are already seasonal and unpredictable, leaving fishers' incomes just as exposed to a lean month as any farm worker's, are further threatened by the prospect of

offshore oil and gas drilling in Western Cape waters, a risk to the fish stocks an entire town's income depends on, weighed against a payout that will never reach the crew of a fishing boat or the workers in a processing shed.

Farm dwellers can lose the roof over their heads the same week they lose the job, tied housing and tied income bound together so tightly that a dismissal is an eviction. Many are not formally "urban" enough to sit on a municipal housing list and not formally protected enough to keep the room they have lived in for twenty years.

Meanwhile the guest house owner, the wine estate's overseas shareholder, and the tour operator who buses visitors in and out for the day take the margin and leave the wage. A short-term rental listing can price a nurse or a teacher out of the town they grew up in faster than any council decision. And when the harvest is good and the tourists are many, the town's own residents are too often watching from outside a fence they built, on a wage set by someone who has never spent a winter there.

This is not a story about towns lacking potential. It is a story about where investment, infrastructure and political attention are allowed to land, and where they are not. The provincial government sits in Cape Town. Provincial budgets are drafted with Cape Town's problems foremost in mind. Towns get a site visit before an election and a press release when a project opens, then are left to manage decline on their own between now and the next one. A pothole ignored for a season, an ambulance that takes an hour instead of ten minutes, a farm dweller with nowhere to turn when eviction papers arrive: these are not rural inconveniences. They are the same failure of standard this manifesto's sister document names in Cape Town itself, playing out on a smaller stage with even less scrutiny.

Towns are not the backdrop to this province's economy and culture. They are the source of it. The language spoken in a Karoo kitchen, the trek routes and the harvest songs, the fynbos knowledge passed down for six generations, the Sunday choir in a Bo-Kaap-adjacent town hall: this is not tourism inventory, it is living heritage, and it deserves investment, not extraction. A province that lets its towns hollow out while it photographs them for a wine label is not looking after its own foundation.

None of this is inevitable, and none of it is unfixable. It is a set of choices, repeated every budget cycle, every tender, every farm eviction; nobody in the municipal office had the mandate or the will to stop. GOOD has spent this term fighting the same machine in Cape Town and in the towns around it, from the courtroom to the council chamber, and this manifesto is how we take that fight to the towns that actually create the province's wealth.

Six pledges, mirrored deliberately from the standard we are setting for Cape Town itself, because a resident

of Ceres or Gansbaai or Oudtshoorn is owed exactly the same standard as a resident of Sea Point: an Affordable Town, a Housed Town, an Equitable Town, a Safe Town, a Trusted Town, and a Working Town. Each one names the mechanism, not just the ambition, because a promise made to a town that has heard a hundred empty promises before needs to show its working.

This is the GOOD way forward - for every town this province depends on, and too often forgets.

1.

AN AFFORDABLE TOWN

A municipal bill built for a salaried, twelve-month income does not fit a seasonal wage. Farm workers, pickers, fishers, forestry crews and seasonal tourism staff earn well in season and next to nothing for months at a time, a squeeze climate change is making worse as erratic rainfall and drought shorten or shift the harvest calendar, unpredictable seas do the same to a fishing season, and longer fire seasons increasingly interrupt forestry and tourism work alike. However, rates, water and electricity accounts arrive on the same fixed schedule as anywhere else, with the same penalties and the same march toward debt collectors when a payment is missed in the lean season. Farm dwellers billed through a farm's own electricity connection have no municipal account of their own to appeal to when the mark-up is unfair or the deduction unexplained. And the small municipalities carrying most of this burden are themselves often under-capacitated, unable to resolve a billing error in under a year, let alone a month.

THE GOOD WAY FORWARD

- **Season-linked relief:**

Restructure payment plans for seasonal households; farm, fishing, forestry and tourism workers alike, so instalments scale down in the off-season instead of accumulating penalty interest, with the indigent

register explicitly built to recognise seasonal income patterns, whether tied to a harvest calendar, a fishing season, a felling contract or a tourist season, rather than penalising them.

- **Tied-housing tariff protections:**

Extend the protection to farm dwellers billed through an employer's connection: no mark-up above the equivalent municipal tariff, and no use of a worker's electricity or water access to recover a farm's own debts.

- **Drought-fair water tariffs:**

When restrictions are imposed during a drought, protect a free basic water allocation for indigent households first, rather than letting punitive tariff steps fall hardest on the households with the least buffer.

- **Shared regional billing capacity:**

Smaller municipalities pool billing, dispute-resolution and ombud capacity through district-level shared services, so a resident of a small town gets the same speed of correction as a resident of a metro, instead of waiting on a two-person finance office to get to their file.

- **Transparent, town-scale tariff-setting:**

Public participation on tariff increases scaled to how small towns actually communicate; town hall meetings, community radio, isiXhosa and Afrikaans as a default, not an afterthought, not a notice buried in a metro-wide gazette nobody in a farming, fishing, forestry or mining town ever sees.

- **Safe, subsidised transport to and from farms, forests and factories:**

Regulate and subsidise the informal "labour bakkie" transport many farm, factory, packhouse and forestry workers rely on, which is currently unsafe and unregulated, and extend off-peak transport relief to the routes that move seasonal workers between home and harvest, forest or plant.

- **Plain-language billing:**

Redesign small-municipality accounts so a resident can read exactly what they are being charged and why, in the language they actually use.

ture municipal payment schedules to match how seasonal households actually earn, and guarantee that anyone in tied housing, including farmworkers along our coast, can hold their own municipal account, access the same indigent tariffs as everyone else, and never have services used as leverage against them. Both changes need only council policy and a by-law, cost nothing extra, and save what default and write-offs already cost us. We'll then pilot shared regional billing across two or three district municipalities, so no small town has to build a finance department it can't afford, before rolling it out wider.

HOW WE DELIVER IT

No family should lose water or power because their income arrives seasonally, not monthly. GOOD will restruct-

2.

A HOUSED TOWN

A farm dweller can lose a home of decades in the same week they lose a job, tied housing and tied income bound so tightly that eviction is often functionally instant, regardless of what the Extension of Security of Tenure Act says on paper. In our coastal towns, a fisher's home near the harbour faces the same speculative pressure with none of ESTA's protections to fall back on. And at the other end of the same town, a short-term rental listing can convert a street of family homes into holiday lets faster than any council can respond, until a teacher, a nurse, a farm worker or a hotel housekeeper cannot afford to live in the town they grew up in. Informal settlements carry that same insecurity into a changing climate: without secure services, a flood or a heatwave hits hardest exactly where drainage and water infrastructure are already thinnest, and in forest-fringe towns like those around Knysna and George, informal housing built without any fire buffer sits directly in the path of the next fire season. Waiting lists in small towns are just as long, relative to population, as anywhere in the metro, and just as opaque.

THE GOOD WAY FORWARD

- **Enforce ESTA, properly:**

The law says farm dwellers cannot be thrown off the land without due process. In practice, that right belongs to whoever can afford a lawyer. We will count every eviction and get every affected family to Legal Aid before the court date, not after the bakkie has left.

- **Regulate short-term rental conversion in high-tourism towns:**

Cap and register short-term letting in towns where it is visibly displacing residents, protecting a baseline of housing stock for people who live and work there year-round.

- **In-situ upgrading, not indefinite deferral:**

Security of tenure, water, sanitation and electricity delivered where informal settlements already stand, on published timelines and built with basic climate resilience, proper drainage and flood-safe siting, instead of a promise of relocation that never arrives.

- **Release well-located municipal and provincial land:**

Audit and publish an inventory of town-centre land currently sitting unused or earmarked for tourism

development, and prioritise a share of it for affordable housing close to where the jobs actually are.

- **Farmworker equity and housing schemes:**

Back and expand ownership and equity-share models already piloted on some Western Cape farms, tying long-term housing security to a genuine stake in the enterprise a family has spent generations working for.

- **Fast, transparent, audited waiting lists:**

A housing list residents can check themselves, closing the informal, off-the-books allocation that quietly favours whoever knows the right official.

support is funded by national treasury through Legal Aid South Africa, and it is how farm dwellers get a lawyer when they face eviction. The municipality does not fund it, but it can make sure it is reachable. We will track every eviction in the municipality alongside the accountability audits under Pledge Three, so evictions are counted, not just litigated case by case, and we will refer affected households to Legal Aid before the court date, not after it. The land audit is published within the first six months, and progress on releasing publicly owned land is reported publicly every quarter.

HOW WE DELIVER IT

Land release is a question of political will on already publicly owned land, not new spending. ESTA legal

3.

AN EQUITABLE TOWN

Walk from a town's tourist centre to its township and the standard of service changes at a line you can feel underfoot: tar becomes gravel, streetlights become darkness, a clinic with a full roster becomes a clinic with one nurse for three villages. Ask how long an ambulance takes to reach the historic centre after a fall, and how long it takes to reach the settlement on the town's edge after a stabbing. The same gap shows up in climate exposure: which side of town gets a working stormwater system, and which side floods; which side has water storage that survives a drought, and which side is first to run dry; which side sits behind a cleared fire buffer, and which side does not.

THE GOOD WAY FORWARD

- **One standard, every town, every ward:**

A single published service standard for roads, water, lighting, parks and clinics, applied without exception across every settlement in a municipality, not just the section on the tourist route.

- **Binding, equal repair timelines:**

The same turnaround time for a pothole or an outage in a farm worker settlement as in a wine-tasting town centre, measured and reported the same way.

- **Climate-resilient basic services:**

Water storage, drainage and backup capacity built to the same standard in every settlement, so a drought or a flood does not hit the township or the farm settlement first and hardest.

- **Emergency response parity:**

Response-time targets tracked by settlement and published, with the gap between a town centre and its township treated as a failure to be closed, not a fact of rural life.

- **Extend indigent Lifeline support to farm dwellers and backyarders:**

Remove the requirement that support attach only to a formal property-owning account holder, so a family living in tied farm housing or a backyard structure can register directly.

- **Accountability over ribbon-cutting:**

Performance measured against the published standard, not against a single opening-day photograph for a facility that is then left to decay.

HOW WE DELIVER IT

The standard is published within the first six months and funded by redirecting existing maintenance and emergency-response budgets toward the settlements currently furthest below it, rather than new spending. Lifeline eligibility is amended to attach to the meter or the residence, not the account holder, so backyarders and farm dwellers can register with proof of residence alone. Ward- and settlement-level performance data is published quarterly.

4.

A SAFE TOWN

Gangsterism is not only a Cape Flats story; Worcester, Ceres, Saldanha Bay and other Western Cape farming, fishing and mining towns carry it too, alongside a harm this province has never properly reckoned with: the dop system, banned in law decades ago, left behind some of the highest documented rates of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder anywhere on earth, concentrated in the same farming communities that grow this province's wine. That is not history. It is a public health crisis still shaping the next generation, in towns where support services are thinnest and furthest away. Add to that the isolation of farm worker women facing gender-based violence with no shelter, no transport, and often no phone signal to call for help; a risk that only sharpens when a flood or fire cuts off a road or a power line in the same moment a household is already in crisis, and safety in a small town is a different, and in some ways harder, problem than safety in a metro.

THE GOOD WAY FORWARD

- **Extend the Youth Recreation and Cohesion Fund to towns:**

Sports fields, courts and multi-purpose centres in the highest-risk town settlements, funded as core safety infrastructure, not an amenity to be cut first.

- **FASD prevention and support as a funded public health priority:**

Dedicated investment in prevention, early screening and family support in farming communities carrying the dop system's legacy. This is an emergency affecting most municipalities across the province and deserves to be treated as such.

- **GBV survivor support built for isolation:**

Safe houses, transport and communication support designed for farm worker and rural communities specifically, not a service designed for a metro and thinly extended outward.

- **Community-led violence interruption:**

Funding and formal standing for local mediation and

peace-building structures already working in gang-affected towns, recognising that the people best placed to de-escalate a conflict live inside the community, not outside it.

- **Demilitarised, community-centred policing coordination:**

Municipal oversight and input pushing SAPS resourcing in small towns toward trained, community-facing policing rather than sporadic heavy-handed deployment that has not moved the numbers.

active in these towns, prioritised by need. GBV support is ring-fenced as a dedicated local health and social development line item rather than left to compete against every other rural health priority. Implementation begins with a settlement-level audit of existing under-used infrastructure and current gaps in survivor support within the first six months, with the first funded programmes running within the first year.

HOW WE DELIVER IT

Facility upgrades are funded through partnerships with sports development bodies and gang-exit NGOs already

5.

A TRUSTED TOWN

Many Western Cape towns have been governed by the same party, in the same way, for so long that residents have stopped expecting a council meeting to change anything. Ward committees exist on paper. Farm worker communities, living on privately owned land, often have no formal civic structure representing them at all, no address the municipality recognises as a constituency. Fishing and forestry communities face the same gap from the opposite direction: decisions about quotas, permits, felling licences and offshore drilling licences are made in national and provincial departments with little requirement to consult the harbour and forestry towns whose entire economy depends on the answer. Decisions about a town's water, its land, its budget, and increasingly its exposure to drought, flood and fire risk, are frequently made in Cape Town or in a provincial office, by people who visit before an election and not much in between.

farm worker and informal settlement communities who are too often left off the list entirely.

- **Formal civic standing for farm worker communities:**

Establish a recognised structure through which farm dwellers can raise concerns and be consulted, regardless of whether they sit inside a municipality's normal ward boundaries.

- **Open council and tender proceedings:**

Open small-municipality council, bid adjudication and tender processes to public scrutiny, since it is precisely in low-visibility small towns that this kind of decision-making tends to escape any scrutiny at all.

- **A real petitions channel:**

A clear, working route for residents of small towns to raise issues directly with their council, where none currently and meaningfully exists.

THE GOOD WAY FORWARD

- **Participatory budgeting at town scale:**

Give residents direct say over a defined share of their town's budget, including explicit representation for

HOW WE DELIVER IT

Opening council and tender proceedings and establishing a petitions channel require only changes to council rules, achievable within six months. Participatory budgeting is piloted in a small number of towns within the first year, with an independent review before wider roll-out. Formal

civic standing for farm worker communities is scoped in partnership with existing farm worker unions and civic organisations, so the structure reflects how these communities already organise rather than imposing one from outside.

6.

A WORKING TOWN

This province's towns generate its wine exports, its fruit exports, its fish exports, its timber and mineral exports, and its tourism revenue, and keep almost none of the margin. A wine estate's profits can sit with an overseas shareholder while the person who pruned the vines earns a seasonal wage with no offer of work come winter, the same as a quota holder banking the value of a catch while the crew that hauled it in are paid only for the trip, the same as a mining company shipping ore through Saldanha while the town around the port sees none of the long-term investment that revenue could fund, the same as a hotel group pocketing peak-season rates while the staff who ran the season are laid off the moment it ends. A tour operator can bus visitors through a town for a single afternoon and leave nothing behind but the parking fee. Land that could anchor local agro-processing or timber processing, and a genuine share of the value chain for the towns that grow, catch or fell the raw product, instead gets exported raw, milled, packaged or shipped out somewhere else, with the local wage attached only to the harvesting, the catch or the cut.

THE GOOD WAY FORWARD

- **Back local agro-processing over raw export:**

Invest in and incentivise processing, packaging and value-add facilities located in the towns that grow the raw product, so a greater share of a harvest's value stays where it was grown.

- **Farmworker equity and cooperative ownership:**

Expand equity-share and cooperative ownership models on the farms in the town across the Western

Cape and in tourism ventures, so the people doing the work hold a genuine stake in what they produce, not just a wage for producing it.

- **Protect fishing communities from offshore drilling risk:**

Oppose offshore oil and gas exploration and drilling licences in Western Cape waters where they risk the fish stocks a fishing town's income depends on, and guarantee fishers and fishing communities themselves, not only environmental agencies, a formal seat at the table before any licence is granted.

- **Protect agricultural and heritage land from speculative rezoning:**

Resist the conversion of productive farmland and heritage sites into speculative estate or holiday development where it displaces the town's working economy and its residents.

- **Fast-track cooperative registration and tender access for small towns:**

Connect small-town cooperatives and informal traders to municipal tenders and start-up finance. Because enforcement raids on informal food sellers happen all across towns in the Western Cape.

- **Digital infrastructure and remote-work hubs:**

Invest in connectivity and shared workspace in towns to open up work beyond the harvest and the tour bus, and slow the drain of young people leaving for Cape Town because there is nothing else on offer at home.

- **Insourcing municipal jobs, town by town:**

Bring outsourced cleaning, security and maintenance functions in small municipalities back in-house with fair pay and stable conditions, ending the same wage-suppression this manifesto commits to ending in the metro.

HOW WE DELIVER IT

Agro-processing and cooperative investment are prioritised through provincial economic development funding and blended finance with development finance institutions, targeted at towns rather than concentrated in the metro. Land-use protections are enforced through the provincial spatial planning framework, reviewed against every rezoning application in a high-tourism or high-agricultural-value town. Insourcing is phased by function over eighteen months. An agricultural and heritage land audit runs alongside the housing land audit under Pledge Two, so land-use decisions for a town are made once, coherently, not pledge by pledge.



GOOD

THE GOOD 2046

A Western Cape town, 2046. The harvest still comes in every year, but the family that picked it has a share in what it's worth, and a home that isn't tied to the job. There's one road standard in this town, and it runs the same whether you're headed to the workers' housing or the tasting room. The clinic has a full roster, and the ambulance doesn't know the difference between one side of town and the other.

A young person here doesn't have to choose between the farm and the bus to Cape Town. There's a workshop, a cooperative, a processing plant that turns this town's

harvest into something worth more before it ever leaves, and there's a reason to stay and build a life around it.

The wine, the whales, the wheat, the fish, the festivals: they still bring the world here. But the town keeps its share this time, and the people who made it worth visiting are the ones the visit actually benefits.

This is not an aspiration. This is a promise. This is what a Tulbagh, in 2046, could look like because a GOOD province refused to sit idly by.



2046

**IS A PROVINCE BUILT
BY ITS TOWNS,
FOR ITS TOWNS**