



■ JOINT EVENT · 20TH NAFE CONFERENCE

What is Life Worth?

A Transatlantic Dialogue on Compensation

8-9 June 2026

Centre for Actuarial Compensation and Valuation of Life (CAVOL)

University of York

National Association of Forensic Economics (NAFE)

■ LIFE ESIDIMENI • THE HUMAN TOLL

The tragedy in numbers

A 30-year specialised mental-health contract was ended on cost grounds; 1,606 patients were moved to ill-prepared facilities.

 **30** years

Life Esidimeni had provided specialised mental-health care for Gauteng.

 **1,606**

patients transferred — 1,329 of them within a two-month window.

 **27** NGOs

non-profit facilities that received the transferred patients.

 **2–3** months

NGOs took this long after intake to recruit health professionals.

 **144**

patients known to have died in the care chain.

 **44**

patients still recorded as missing.

 **1,418**

patients known to have survived.

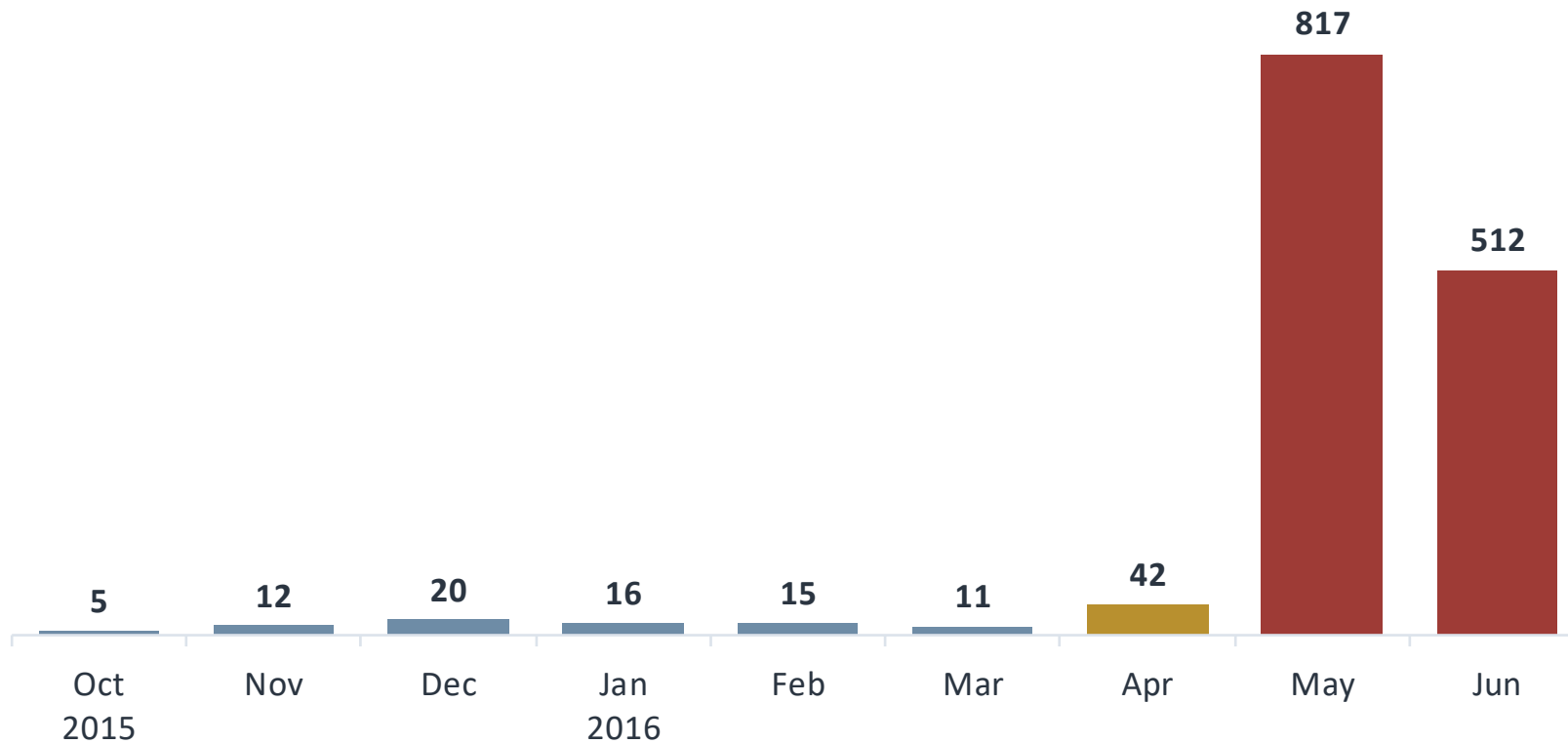
 **R1m**

constitutional damages later ordered per claimant.

■ PATIENTS MOVED PER MONTH · OCT 2015 – JUN 2016

A last-minute rush to transfer

The department moved roughly 90% of the 1,606 patients in the final two months of the contract.



13 / month

Average transfers, Oct 2015 to Mar 2016: a steady, manageable pace.

~37 / day

In May 2016 alone, an average of about 37 patients were moved every single day.

+3 months

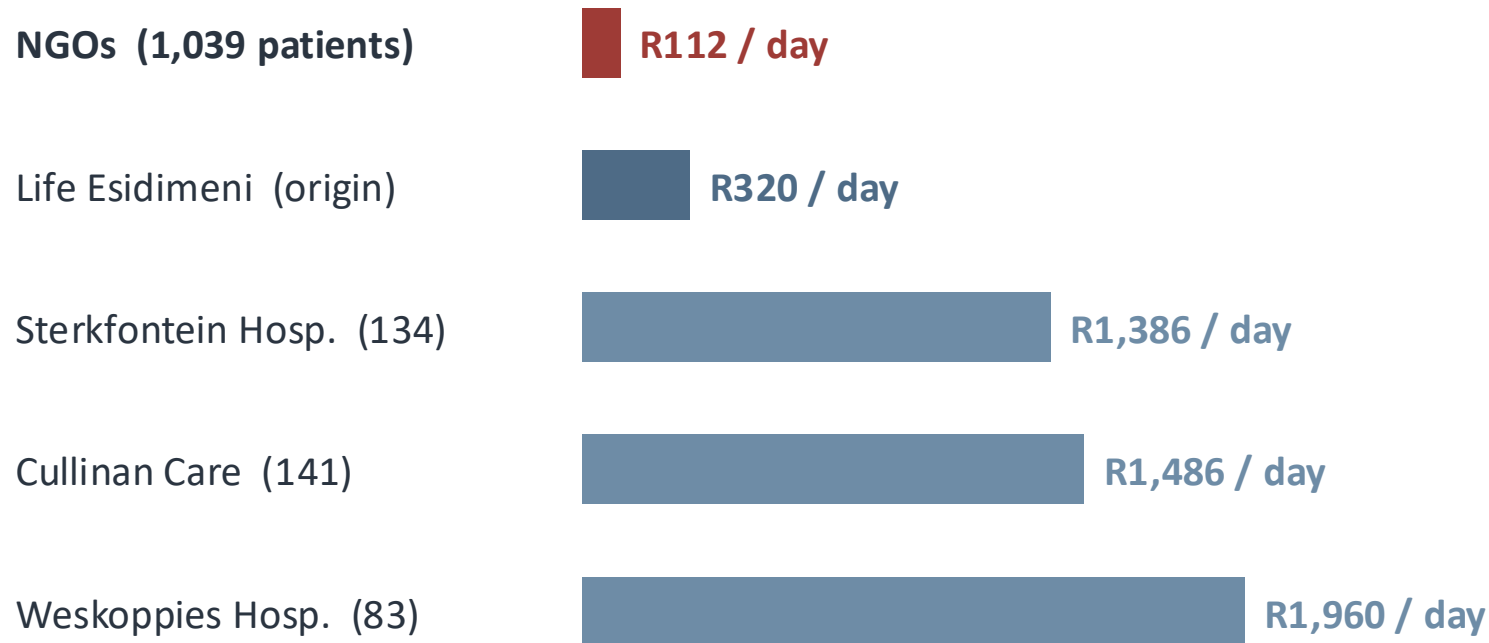
The contract was extended, yet transfers were rushed into its final weeks (Apr–Jun).

■ COST PER PATIENT PER DAY VS OUTCOMES

The economics of the move

Patients were moved from regulated care to the cheapest available facilities — where the great majority of deaths then occurred.

DAILY COST OF CARE, PER PATIENT (RAND)



95%

of the 144 known deaths
occurred in NGO facilities

Those NGOs were paid **R112 a day** — about a third of Life Esidimeni's rate and roughly **one-seventeenth** of a public-hospital bed.

■ THE ROAD TO JUSTICE · PART I OF III

Collapse and the count (2015–2017)

SEP 2015

Contract terminated

Gauteng ends a 30-year specialised-care contract on 6 months' notice. More than 1,000 patients are slated to move to non-profit care.

AUG–SEP 2016

First alarms

A bereaved family exposes deaths at Precious Angels. The MEC concedes 36 deaths to Parliament; evidence already points to 77.

MAY–JUN 2016

The rush

817 patients are moved in a single month. By the contract's end, 65% of patients are with 27 NGOs holding invalid licences.

FEB–OCT 2017

The reckoning begins

The Health Ombud finds 94 known deaths & inhumane treatment. Mahlangu resigns; Justice Moseneke opens arbitration; death toll 144.

■ THE ROAD TO JUSTICE · PART II OF III

Accountability and arbitration (2018–2020)

MAR 2018

Arbitration award

Moseneke orders R1-million in constitutional damages per claimant, plus R200,000 for psychological injury, funeral and other costs.

MAR 2019

Systemic failures

The SA Human Rights Commission inquiry into the state of mental healthcare finds systemic failures across the system.

JUN–JUL 2018

Compensation & controversy

Families are paid. Former MEC Mahlangu is briefly appointed to the provincial executive, then steps down after public outcry.

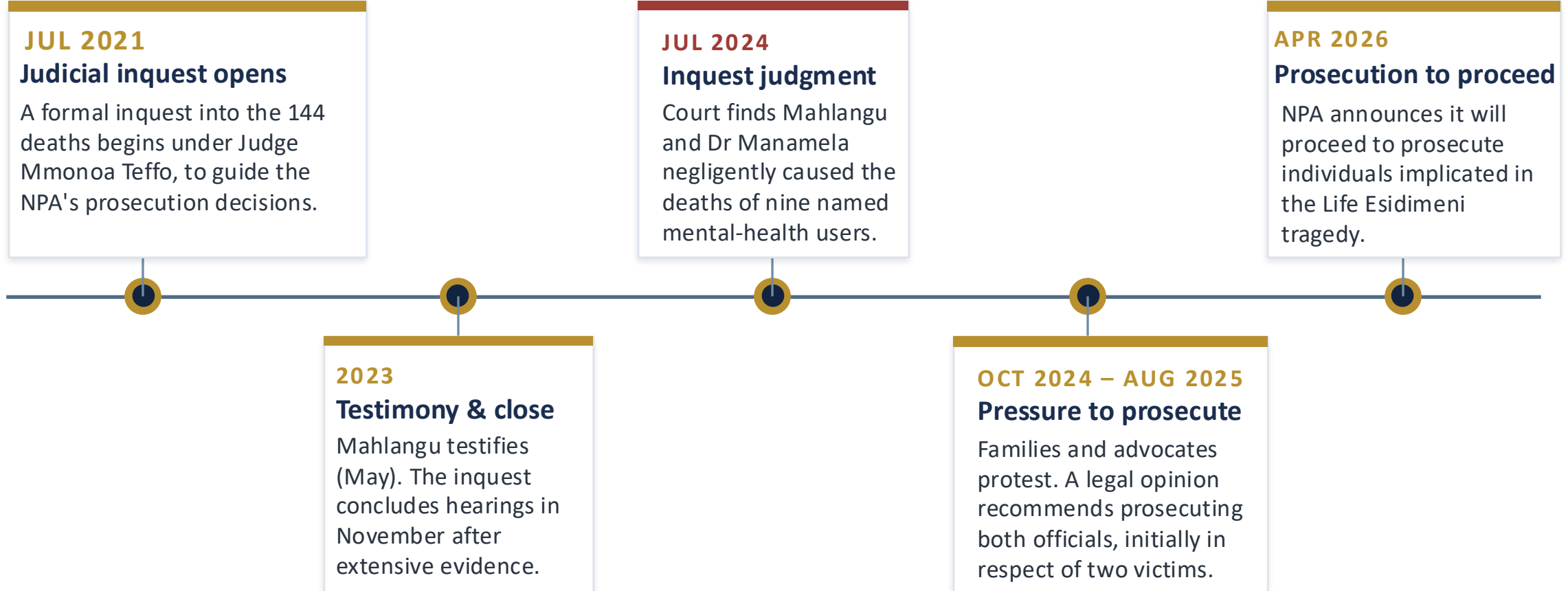
SEP 2019

No charges — yet

The National Prosecuting Authority reports it lacks sufficient evidence to charge officials and NGOs for the 144 known deaths.

■ THE ROAD TO JUSTICE · PART III OF III

The inquest and prosecution (2021–2026)



THE CENTRAL QUESTION

So — what is a life worth?

The Life Esidimeni record sets three figures against one another.

R112

PER PATIENT, PER DAY

The rate paid for the NGO care in which 95% of the 144 deaths occurred.

144

LIVES LOST

Deaths recognised on the record, with 44 patients still missing.

R1m

PER CLAIMANT

Constitutional damages later ordered for each life lost.