

MAGAZINE

2/2025

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The following values guide the PSA's conduct aimed at achieving the Union's mission:

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
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Editorial



PSA committed to a **better South Africa**

Over its 105 years of existence, the PSA has grown to be more than a Union. The PSA has become a cornerstone in addressing South Africa's pressing socio-economic challenges. The country continues to face significant hurdles, including poverty, rising unemployment that disproportionately affects women and youth, inequality, and lacking access to essential public services. These challenges, which weigh heavily on the nation's quality of life and economic growth, especially in under-served rural areas.

To address these issues and enhance the public sector, it is imperative for government to strengthen public institutions by ensuring sufficient staff, equipped with the necessary resources for improved service delivery. Without these foundational investments, the goal of a thriving and equitable society will not be achieved.

The PSA, as a caring Union, has consistently embraced its role in uplifting society. Through ongoing corporate social investment initiatives, the PSA has actively contributed to alleviating burdens for South Africans. The Union has assisted various public institutions such as schools, clinics, and police stations with pressing needs. The PSA's efforts are rooted in its commitment to making a meaningful difference.

The PSA remains resolute in its mission to expand the Union's reach and strengthen service delivery to all corners of the country. This includes exerting sustained pressure on government to prioritise safe and conducive work environments for workers who dedicate themselves to serving the nation and for citizens relying on these services. Investments in infrastructure and the allocation of essential resources, particularly in the education, health, and safety sectors, are critical to achieving these goals.

For 105 years, the PSA has championed service excellence, shaping the public sector through impactful actions. From collective bargaining platforms to the strategic use of legal resources, the Union has consistently worked to benefit its members and improve service delivery.

The PSA continues to position itself as the Union of the future, a space where every public servant can thrive in their careers in delivering services.

In 2025, the PSA will host the Union's main Workers' Day celebration in Mpumalanga. Workers' Day holds profound significance in South Africa, symbolising the struggles, sacrifices, and victories of workers and unions. *Also read the article on page 8.*

Moving forward, the PSA remains steadfast in its mission to drive positive change. With a commitment to service excellence, advocacy, and social investment, the Union continues to pave the way for a stronger, more equitable South Africa.

Moving forward, PSA branches, committees, officials and members must remain vigilant and not take for granted the past "PSA capture", which nearly compromised the Union. The PSA, as a home for many public servants, will always attract undesired individuals disguised as genuine leaders with the intention to again "capture" the PSA. Collectively we must remain steadfast in protecting the PSA as a going concern. With a commitment to service excellence, advocacy, and social investment, the Union continues to pave the way for a stronger, more equitable public sector.

Reuben Maleka
GENERAL MANAGER



In service of public-sector employees





Government Employees Medical Scheme **CAUSE FOR HEADACHE?**

South Africa's dual healthcare system is characterised by a heavily burdened public sector and an increasingly unaffordable private sector. Approximately 82% of South Africans rely on the strained public healthcare system owing to socio-economic disparities, leaving private medical-aid schemes accessible to only a minority.

The Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS) was established as a landmark initiative to provide affordable and accessible medical cover, particularly for lower-income public servants. However, GEMS has increasingly failed to meet its founding principles, becoming a source of financial strain rather than relief.

The recent 13.4% GEMS premium increase has drawn significant backlash from members, with unions, including the PSA, labelling the hike irrational and unsustainable. The increase compounds years of medical-aid costs consistently outpacing inflation, whilst employee wages stagnate, exacerbating financial pressures. Many members have called for the PSA to push for equitable employer subsidies across all medical-aid schemes or to establish a customised alternative medical aid.

The challenges are rooted in systemic issues, including insufficient employer subsidies that fail to keep pace with rising costs, GEMS' limited competitiveness compared to other schemes, and the PSA's constrained role in GEMS decisions. Although a working committee exists for consultation, its recommendations are routinely dismissed, leaving members without meaningful recourse to influence policy or pricing decisions.

The PSA has proposed multiple solutions to address these issues, including:

- **Litigation:** Challenging the GEMS Board and Council for Medical Schemes for approving irrational increases that undermine affordability.
- **Industrial action:** Advocating for enhanced employer subsidies to counterbalance escalating premiums.
- **Policy reform:** Pursuing the equalisation of employer subsidies for all medical-aid schemes.

Despite these efforts, progress has been stymied by rigid agreements and employer resistance. GEMS continues to leverage its monopoly status as a closed medical-aid scheme, pricing itself out of reach for many public servants who have little choice but to remain members. It must be pointed out that GEMS increases are approved by the GEMS Board of Directors and not a matter that is agreed with the Unions. The Unions are merely consulted on the increases.

The PSA has previously obtained a legal opinion on the issue of a higher subsidy being afforded to those on GEMS has opposed to open schemes and the opinion indicated no discrepancies as far as this was concerned.

The rising costs of healthcare and the ineffectiveness of GEMS in fulfilling its mandate threaten the well-being of its members. The PSA remains committed to championing for affordable and equitable access to quality healthcare, exploring all avenues to mitigate the financial burden on employees. However, without systemic reforms and a shift in employer attitude, GEMS risks perpetuating rather than alleviating the healthcare challenges faced by public servants.



In service of public-sector employees



National Health Insurance Act **Impact on Government Employees Medical Scheme**

On 25 May 2024, President Cyril Ramaphosa signed the *National Health Insurance (NHI) Act* into law, marking a transformative moment in South Africa's healthcare system. The NHI aims to provide universal access to quality healthcare services for all South Africans, irrespective of income or socio-economic status. Whilst the *Act* is an ambitious step towards realising constitutional principles, it has drawn sharp criticism from various sectors, including trade unions, private medical-aid schemes, and professional associations such as the South African Medical Association.

The NHI's primary goal is to address South Africa's deeply entrenched healthcare inequalities. It proposes a single, state-managed fund to pool resources and ensure that all citizens can access healthcare services based on medical needs rather than their ability to pay. This aligns with section 27 of the Constitution, which states:

Everyone has the right to have access to health care services, and no one may be refused emergency medical treatment.


Advocates for the NHI argue that it will rectify systemic disparities by redistributing resources between the public and private healthcare sectors. The Department of Health emphasizes that private healthcare, which serves only 16% of the population, currently consumes more than half of all healthcare expenditure. By centralising funding, the NHI is expected to standardise care quality, improve infrastructure, and address staff shortages in public hospitals and clinics. The NHI is also intended to curb high administrative costs, prevent fraud, and provide better coordination of care. For public-sector healthcare workers, it promises higher salaries, improved working conditions, and better career opportunities to curb the exodus of medical professionals to other countries.

Criticism and concerns

With lofty goals, the NHI faces significant challenges. Critics highlight vague funding mechanisms, with the *Act* relying heavily on a withholding tax that will increase the financial burden on taxpayers. A study by the University of the Free State identifies potential consequences, including rising unemployment as private medical schemes downsize and redundancy in private-sector jobs. The mandatory nature of the NHI also raises concerns about individual autonomy. South Africans will be required to contribute to the NHI Fund regardless of whether they wish to use the system. Critics argue that this model unfairly penalises the healthy to subsidise the sick and limits citizens' freedom to choose their healthcare providers. The potential for "brain drain" is significant. Medical practitioners dissatisfied with public-sector reforms or salaries may seek better foreign opportunities, exacerbating South Africa's critical shortage of healthcare professionals.

Impact on public servants and GEMS

The Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS) was established to provide affordable and accessible healthcare for public servants. The NHI's implementation introduces uncertainty about the future of GEMS. Under the NHI, medical schemes such as GEMS will be restricted to offering complementary cover for services not included in the NHI benefits package. Whilst section 33 of the *Act* clarifies that medical schemes can continue to operate in this capacity, the limitation significantly reduces their scope. Public servants who currently enjoy subsidised contributions to GEMS, may face a dual financial burden: mandatory contributions to the NHI Fund and optional payments to maintain GEMS membership for complementary cover.



Resolution 1/2006, which governs medical subsidies for public servants, states that these subsidies are a personal benefit for employees, distinct from social welfare obligations such as the NHI contribution. If GEMS ceases operations, the Resolution guarantees that public servants can join other registered medical schemes without losing their subsidies. However, government may argue that NHI contributions replace the need for subsidies, potentially creating disputes on contractual obligations. A unilateral withdrawal from the Resolution by government could constitute a breach of contract or unfair labour practice, leading to legal challenges.

Broader implications for medical schemes

The NHI will fundamentally reshape South Africa's healthcare landscape, with medical schemes restricted to providing "top-up" cover. Critics argue that phasing out private schemes' role in primary healthcare could strain the public system, which lacks the infrastructure and resources to meet national demand.

The Act's opponents also view this restriction as an infringement on citizens' rights to choose private healthcare. Limiting access to private medical services is likened to banning private education or security services, both of which coexist with public counterparts. Forcing South Africans into a single system could lead to inefficiencies and longer wait times, undermining the quality of care. For now, private healthcare providers, pharmacies, and hospitals will remain operational. Their role in the broader healthcare system may, however, diminish, raising concerns about innovation and service quality in the private sector.

Cautious path forward

Whilst the vision of universal healthcare is noble and necessary, the NHI's practical challenges cannot be ignored. The Act addresses critical issues of equity and access but raises questions about funding, resource allocation, and the future of existing healthcare structures such as GEMS. To achieve its goals, the NHI must be implemented cautiously, with thorough consultation and planning. A phased approach could help mitigate risks, ensuring that public and private sectors work together to deliver equitable, high-quality healthcare for all South Africans.

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<https://www.gems.gov.za/Information/GEMS%20mandate>

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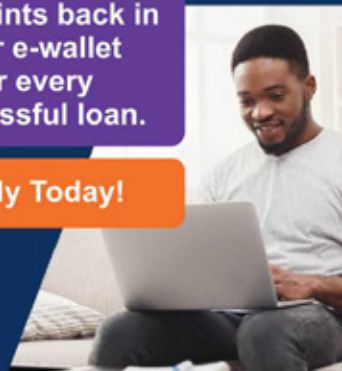
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Workers' Day

PSA's role in shaping South Africa's labour landscape for 105 years

As the world commemorates Workers' Day on 1 May, South African workers will once again gather to reflect on their struggles, achievements, and the continued battle for fair labour practices. This year marks 105 years since the establishment of the PSA. The Union has played a crucial role in shaping the South African labour movement and the PSA continues to be a formidable force in advocating for public-sector employees.

Significance of Workers' Day 2025

Workers' Day in South Africa has deep roots in the battle against exploitation and inequality. Originally inspired by global labour movements, it gained prominence in South Africa as part of the struggle against apartheid and unfair labour practices. Today, it serves as a day to recognise the contributions of workers across industries and to highlight ongoing challenges. These include job security and the need for permanent employment, job opportunities in the public and private sectors, and the impact of budget cuts and austerity measures on salaries, benefits, and public service delivery. There is a need for fair wages and improved working conditions, particularly for frontline workers such as nurses, teachers, police officers, and cleaners. In addition, there is a demand for greater investment in workplace safety and fair dispute resolution mechanisms.

PSA's legacy: 105 years of labour advocacy

Founded in 1920, the PSA has been at the forefront of advocating for the rights of South African public servants. Over the past 105 years, the PSA has played a significant role in shaping labour policies, influencing government decisions, and improving working conditions.



Championing collective bargaining

One of PSA's biggest contributions has been its firm stance on collective bargaining. As a leading Union in the public sector, the PSA has consistently pushed for fair wage negotiations, preventing unilateral government wage freezes, and ensuring that public servants receive fair salary adjustments.

Opposing austerity measures and budget cuts

In recent years, the South African government has introduced austerity measures that have led to freezing of vacancies, reduced salary increases and understaffing in critical sectors. The PSA has been vocal in challenging these policies, ensuring that the interests of workers are prioritized over financial constraints.

Advocating for permanent employment and job security

The PSA has led multiple campaigns to end the exploitation of contract workers and ensure that Community Health Workers, security guards, and cleaners are permanently absorbed into the public service. The Union has also opposed unfair retrenchments and excessive use of temporary contracts in government departments.

Legal battles and Labour Court victories

Over the years, PSA has taken various cases to the Labour Court and Constitutional Court to protect workers' rights. These cases have resulted in landmark rulings that prevented unfair dismissals, enforced fair wage settlements, and challenged unlawful employer decisions affecting PSA members.



Ensuring workplace safety and addressing public sector infrastructure

The PSA has been vocal about deteriorating workplace conditions, particularly in government buildings that pose safety hazards. The Union has pressured government to prioritise the renovation of dilapidated offices, hospitals, and schools, ensuring that public servants work in safe and conducive environments.

Promoting inclusivity and diversity in the workplace

The PSA has been instrumental in pushing for gender equality, youth empowerment, and inclusivity in the public service. The Union has consistently called for equal pay for equal work, protection against workplace harassment, and increased representation of women and young professionals in leadership roles.

PSA's role in 2025 Workers' Day celebrations

As the PSA marks 105 years of existence, the 2025 Workers' Day celebrations will be a platform to reflect on past victories and reaffirm the Union's commitment to protecting workers' rights. The PSA's main Workers' Day event will take place in Mpumalanga.

Looking ahead: PSA's future in South Africa's Labour movement

The PSA has made remarkable progress in defending workers' rights. New challenges continue to emerge, and the Union remains committed to increasing its membership and building a stronger, more united labour force. The PSA will continue to challenge unfair pension reforms, advocating for improved service delivery in health, education, and public administration, whilst holding government accountable for budget mismanagement and austerity policies. The PSA will strive to strengthen collective bargaining power to secure better wages and benefits.

Workers' Day 2025 reflects past struggles and is a call to action for continued labour activism. As the PSA commemorates 105 years of unwavering commitment to public servants, it remains a pillar of strength, resilience, and advocacy in South Africa's labour landscape. With its rich history and forward-thinking approach, the PSA is well-positioned to lead the fight for workers' rights in the years to come.

The spirit of unity and resistance that has defined the Union for more than a century will continue to drive its mission - ensuring that workers are respected, protected, and empowered.



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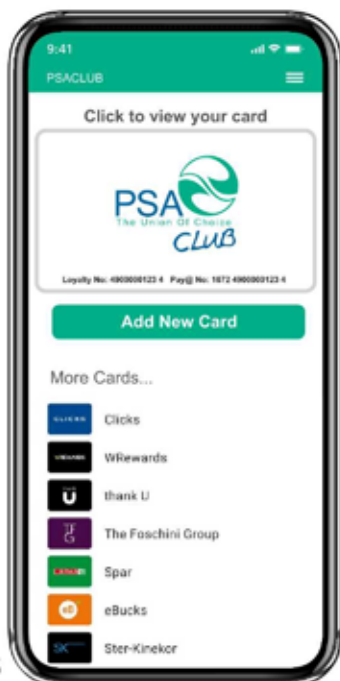
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Deemed dismissal

Recheck on jurisdiction of CCMA and bargaining council

By **Wandile Mphahlele** – PSA Legal Officer

In respect of **deemed dismissals*** whether the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) or a bargaining council must hear the matter depends on whether the employer fulfilled the requirements of deemed dismissal.

The Labour Court has clarified that failure by the commissioner to enquire if deemed dismissal requirements have been met will constitute a gross irregularity. It is now trite that the section 17(3)(a)(i) deemed-dismissal provision does not require a decision in order to operate, it operates automatically in terms of the law if the requirements of the section are met.¹ And where these are met, there is no dismissal for the purposes of the *Labour Relations Act (LRA)* and the bargaining council thus has no jurisdiction over an unfair dismissal dispute.

But what about where the section is relied upon in the absence of the jurisdictional requirements being met? Can the employee then claim that the employee was dismissed under the *LRA*, resulting in the bargaining council having jurisdiction over the unfair dismissal dispute? In effect, the Department contends that the answer is “No”, with the result that the review application is misconceived.

The Labour Court has answered the question in *Nkabinde v PHSDSBC (JR1866/22)*. In this case, the employee argued that the commissioner had failed to undertake a factual enquiry into whether the requirements of section 17(3)(a)(i) of the *Public Service Act* were met and simply assumed that these were because the section had been relied upon in terminating the employee's services. The employee argued that in order to determine whether the requirements of the section were met, the commissioner ought to have heard oral evidence.

The Labour Court agreed that the commissioner committed a gross irregularity in not checking if the requirements for a deemed dismissal had been met before deciding that the bargaining council lacked jurisdiction.

Because the requirements for a deemed dismissal had not been met, the Court had to decide if there had nevertheless been a dismissal as defined by the *LRA* that gave the bargaining council jurisdiction to hear the dispute. It concluded that where the employer erroneously regards employment as having been terminated, the employment relationship does not terminate by operation of law. Instead, it is effectively terminated by the employer's refusal to pay the employee. The Court said that an invalid or wrongful dismissal qualifies as a dismissal for the purposes of the *LRA*. The purpose of the wide definition of dismissal is to extend the *LRA*'s scope to cover the effective dismissal of employees, irrespective of whether their contracts are lawfully/validly terminated.

In summary, if the requirements to trigger the deemed dismissal provision are not met, the CCMA or bargaining council will have the jurisdiction to decide if the dismissal was fair.

***Also read *What is a “Deemed Dismissal”?* (PSA magazine 2/2024, page 23)**

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¹Member of the Executive Council for Health, North West Province v SA Medical Association & another (2022) 43 ILJ 134 (LAC)



Importance of workplace disaster management

Workplace emergencies, ranging from natural disasters such as the recent devastating floods in various parts of the country, to medical incidents, pose significant threats to employees and disrupt operations.

Proactively addressing these risks through effective planning and preparedness is essential to mitigate the impact. Regularly reviewing and refining these plans ensure that they remain relevant and effective. Emergencies in the workplace can stem from natural and human-made causes, including equipment failures, civil disturbances, criminal activities, fires, flooding, hazardous material leaks, medical emergencies, and acts of workplace violence.

Engaging employees in discussions about potential emergencies during team or departmental meetings raises awareness and encourage collaboration. For example, addressing fire risks might involve conducting fire safety training sessions. This participatory approach enhances the quality of emergency plans and empowers employees to take ownership of their safety. Key considerations include:

- Methods for notifying employees about emergencies
- Identifying evacuation routes
- Designating safe gathering points after evacuation

Assigning clear roles and responsibilities is critical. For instance, specific team members can be tasked with guiding evacuations, managing first aid, or coordinating with external responders.

Regular emergency preparedness training equips employees with skills to act swiftly and effectively. An effective emergency management system encompasses pre-incident planning, immediate response strategies, and post-incident recovery protocols.

Key personnel such as managers, safety officers, and possibly external emergency responders, must be included in identifying risks and creating response strategies. Consider worst-case scenarios, evaluate potential outcomes, and develop tailored plans to address these situations. Establish a clear communication plan to ensure that all employees understand how to respond during emergencies. Everyone should know the steps to take and the channels to use for updates. Emergency plans must align with legal requirements. Regular drills and reviews are essential for maintaining compliance and preparing employees for real-world scenarios.

After an emergency, focus on recovery strategies to restore operations quickly and efficiently. Reassess workplace processes and update emergency plans as needed to adapt to new risks or changes in the environment. Regular training and practice drills are critical for maintaining a safe workplace. Well-trained employees are better equipped to respond to unexpected situations confidently and effectively. By fostering a culture of preparedness, employers can enhance employee morale and reduce the risks associated with emergencies.

Source
<https://safetycloud.co.za/emergency-preparedness-and-response-in-the-workplace/>

Digitalisation and automation in government services

Implications and mitigation strategies

South Africa's dual healthcare system is characterised by a heavily burdened public sector and an increasingly unaffordable private sector. **Approximately 82% of South Africans rely on the strained public healthcare system** owing to socio-economic disparities, leaving private medical-aid schemes accessible to only a minority.

Digital transformation is not a new concept, its impact is evident in various services such as applying for identity documents, renewing vehicle licence discs, and filing tax returns. It is government's responsibility to develop digital transformation to use IT governance to provide better services to citizens. Digital transformation without adequate resources will, however, aggravate service delivery to citizens.

President Cyril Ramaphosa during the State of the Nation address in February 2025 mentioned various plans for increased use of digitalisation and artificial intelligence in improving service delivery. Some sectors in government already started implementing digital transformation. The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) and the South African Revenue Service (SARS) are quintessential organisations that are in the lead in providing digital government services. Previously, the DHA provided office-based services to citizens. Applications for smart-card identity documents can now be done online. Public-private partnerships enabled citizens to apply for smart-cards identity cards at select bank branches. This initiative, facilitated by the DHA, allows citizens to complete the applications online and then visit a participating bank branch for biometric data collection. At the same time, SARS has made strides and become a quintessential institution that can provide digital government services and taxpayers file tax returns online.

Literature supports that digital transformation has presented many governments with opportunities to migrate from traditional public administration to more effective and efficient digital services with exceptional quality and being more customer centric. These services are, however, hindered by concerns such as energy insecurity, digital literacy, digital divide, job displacement, role transformation, evolving skill requirements, and changes in work processes.

Strategies to mitigate impact

- **Comprehensive re-skilling programs:** Government departments must prioritise ongoing training and development initiatives. These programs should focus on equipping employees with digital competencies and adaptability skills.
- **Policy development for inclusive transformation:** Developing policies that ensure equitable access to training and opportunities is essential.
- **Change management and stakeholder engagement:** Clear communication and involvement of employees in the transformation process are vital. Collaborative approaches foster buy-in and reduce resistance to changes in workflows.
- **Investment in digital infrastructure** to ensure a smoother implementation of new technologies, reliable connectivity, user-friendly platforms, and system support are critical to ensuring that employees can effectively use the tools provided.
- **Social safety nets:** Programs such as transitional job placement services and unemployment benefits are crucial for employees displaced by automation.

Digitalisation and automation present both opportunities and challenges for the public sector in South Africa. Whilst improving service delivery remains the primary goal, the resulting changes in employment conditions require strategic management to prevent adverse impacts. By prioritising training, inclusivity, and support systems, government departments can ensure a balanced approach to technological adoption, benefiting employees and citizens.

Sources

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In service of public-sector employees



Embracing safety culture in digitalisation era

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) annually commemorates World Day for Safety and Health at Work on 28 April, a vital initiative that underscores the importance of preventing occupational accidents and diseases globally.

By **Aubrey Nappie** – PSA Provincial Manager: Free State

The 2025 theme specifically focuses on the impact of digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI) on workers' safety and health. This evolving landscape presents opportunities and challenges that necessitate attention.

World Day for Safety and Health at Work serves as an awareness-raising campaign aimed at fostering a culture of safety and health. By shining a spotlight on the magnitude of workplace injuries, diseases, and fatalities worldwide, it encourages all stakeholders, including governments, trade unions, employer organisations, and safety practitioners, to unite in the effort to promote preventative measures. In this context, the ILO invites organisations across the globe to partake in various activities that emphasize safety and health. The goal is not merely to observe the day but to instill enduring safety practices in organisations and communities.

Unions, such as the PSA, play a crucial role in raising awareness about workplace safety issues, advocating for improved working conditions, educating workers about their rights, mobilising collective action to address hazards, and promoting a culture of safety through collective bargaining and engagement with employers, essentially acting as a strong voice for workers to ensure their health and safety in the workplace.

The PSA acknowledges that digitalisation and AI can significantly impact workers' safety and health, whilst also offering potential benefits such as automated hazard detection and improved monitoring. Risk may include increased workloads, stress from constant surveillance, and potential job displacement owing to automation, leading to psychosocial concerns. There is thus a need for proper implementation strategies to mitigate negative impacts. It is crucial to evaluate the effectiveness of safety initiatives. Monitor outcomes, gather feedback, and make adjustments to continuously improve safety strategies.

World Day for Safety and Health at Work calls for a commitment to creating a robust culture of safety that addresses traditional risks and navigates the challenges posed by digitalisation and AI. These united efforts will significantly reduce work-related injuries and fatalities, ultimately enhancing the well-being of every worker.

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World Day for Safety and Health at Work provides an opportunity to reflect on the importance of occupational health and safety (OHS) in creating secure and healthy workplaces. The day raises awareness of the critical role OHS plays in protecting the well-being of workers, fostering productivity, and enhancing overall workplace harmony.



Every worker has the right to a safe and healthy workplace



Every worker has the right to a safe and healthy workplace. Occupational injuries and illnesses affect employees and their families and have profound economic and social implications. According to the ILO, millions of work-related fatalities, injuries, and illnesses occur each year, highlighting the urgent need for preventative measures and stronger OHS policies.

The PSA continues to play a critical role in ensuring that health and safety standards are met in the public sector, including the shutting down of unsafe workplaces.

MAKE SAFETY A PRIORITY



Challenges with ongoing non-compliance with OHS regulations, however, remain. The Mbombela High Court in Mpumalanga was, for example, issued a prohibition order issued in November 2024 under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)*, which temporarily revoked operations to grant the employer 60 days to address compliance issues. The Court remains in violation of safety standards. The extended deadline lapsed on 20 January 2025 without resolution, leaving employees and the public exposed to significant health and safety risks. The situation at the Court deteriorated after heavy rainfall in the area. Persistent issues, including leaking roofs, a non-functional HVAC system, locked emergency exits, and non-operational lifts, have created hazardous working conditions. Alarming, fire extinguishers have not been serviced since 2019, and offices designated for file collection are plagued by an unbearable odour.

The PSA is particularly discouraged by the Department of Employment and Labour's (DEL) failure to enforce compliance, even after granting an extended compliance period. Despite repeated requests for inspections at courts and government offices across Mpumalanga, the DEL has not acted.

Unsafe workplaces endanger employees and compromise service delivery to the public. The PSA firmly believes that any building posing a risk to health and safety must be promptly closed until it meets the required standards. Safe workplaces contribute to employee well-being by reducing the risk of injuries and illnesses, ensuring that employees can perform their duties without fear for their safety. Employers will experience increased productivity as healthy workers are more engaged, efficient, and capable of contributing to their departments' success and economic stability as preventing workplace accidents reduces costs associated with healthcare, compensation claims, and lost productivity.

The PSA calls on all stakeholders to uphold the principles of safe and healthy working environments. Employers must prioritise the well-being of employees and government departments must demonstrate their commitment to enforcing OHS regulations. Safety is a shared responsibility and with everyone's corporation accidents can be avoided.

Contact your nearest PSA Provincial Office or shop steward should you encounter non-compliance with OHS regulations in your workplace.

Source
<https://www.ilo.org/resource/article/its-world-day-safety-and-health-work>
 PSA Collective Bargaining



The PSA offers *financial assistance* with funeral costs at the death of a member, provided that the application is received within six months of death



Scan QR code for more information

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In service of public-sector employees

PSA member recruitment: How **YOU** benefit!

A strong Union, growing union, supported by member recruitment efforts, provides significant benefits for individual members and the collective group of members.

A solid and growing membership base strengthens the union's collective bargaining power, allowing it to negotiate better wages and improved working conditions. It further strengthens worker representation in workplace disputes, promotes labour rights advocacy, ensures safer work environments, and educates employees about their rights. The union empowers workers with a collective voice to address concerns, influence policies, and drive positive change in their workplaces.

The PSA is such a strong and growing Union of Choice of more than 240 000 public-sector employees and retired employees, thanks also to members' continued efforts! The PSA rewards registered members who successfully recruit new members for the Union with an honorarium.

To qualify, the recruiter must submit the fully completed membership application form of the new member, ensuring that the recruiter's details are also fully completed on the form. Once the PSA collects the first membership fee from the new member's employer, the recruiter will receive an honorarium equal to the current PSA monthly membership fee of R110 (minus 25% tax).

All PSA members are encouraged to recruit* as many members as possible for the Union of Choice and reap the rewards for these efforts!

***Membership application form provided on page 18 of this magazine.**



PSA
Holiday Resort



Nestled in a lush indigenous dune forest at **Queenera Mouth** east of the Gonubie River and in close proximity to the beach, you will find the **PSA HOLIDAY RESORT**. Just 18 km from East London, the Resort is committed to offering relaxation and tranquility. **The Resort has ten fully-equipped chalets** most with a sea view (choice of two or three bedrooms) and **110 semi-shaded stands for caravans and camping**.

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PSA
The Union Of Choice

20 VERY GOOD REASONS...

WHY THE PSA SHOULD BE YOUR LABOUR HOME

The PSA, a registered trade union, is the largest, politically non-affiliated, fully-representative Union in the Public Service and State-Owned Entities, with a proud history of more than a century of service to members. The PSA...

1. **Is a growing Union** with 240 000+ members served by Provincial Offices across the country.
2. **Attends to members' individual disputes** **FREE** of charge.
3. **Negotiates fair terms of remuneration** and represents members' interests in bargaining structures.
4. **Protects members' service benefits** (including medical aid, pension schemes, and housing subsidies).
5. **Addresses issues** such as fair and reasonable working conditions, hours of work, and leave.
6. **Is the only Union in the Public Service that serves Public Service pensioners.**
7. **Is financially stable** (complies with the *Companies Act and Labour Relations Act*).
8. **Assists beneficiaries and communities throughout South Africa as part of the Union's corporate social investment programs.**
9. **Protects members' rights** and defends them in unfair labour practices or infringements of constitutional rights and legislation (*Labour Relations Act, 1996, Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997, and Employment Equity Act, 1998*). Disputes are resolved at the CCMA, Labour Court, and Labour Appeal Court. In the Public Service, the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC), Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC), Safety and Security Sectoral Bargaining Council (SSSBC), Public Health and Social Development Sectoral Bargaining Council (PHSDSBC), and General Public Service Sectoral Bargaining Council (GPSSBC) provide dispute resolution functions. With the promotion of interests, rights are also established with collective agreements - non-compliance with such rights is being taken care of by these institutions.
10. **Employs professional, dedicated and competent staff** to support member structures in service of members.
11. **Promotes members' interests** during collective bargaining in bargaining forums with employers.
12. **Is admitted to the various bargaining councils**, which enables the Union to resolve workplace problems in these councils, saving cost and time.
13. **Acts only on members' mandate** (mandates on collective issues are obtained from member structures).
14. **Has country-wide, extensive member structures** (national and sectoral) that are the link between the Union and members. These structures mirror the structures for collective bargaining and ensure the protection and promotion of members' rights and interests. Structures are active in all provinces to promote the organisation of members, obtain mandates and improve communication. For information on your PSA representative and structure, contact your local PSA Provincial Office.
15. **Has an impressive success rate in resolving cases** by the Union's full-time staff and thousands of democratically elected, trained shop stewards.
16. **Offers fringe benefits to members, including FREE membership of PSACLUB!**
Other benefits include an exclusive PSA short-term insurance scheme, insurance benefits, funeral schemes, and assistance with debt and personal loans.
17. **Provides FREE financial assistance with funeral costs at a member's death.**
18. **Provides FREE professional indemnity insurance cover** for identified groupings of members (R1 million, per member, per year with no limitation in the aggregate).
19. **Holiday Resort** offers holiday accommodation at discounted rates.
20. **Magazine and workplace-specific newsletters** are issued to members **FREE** of charge - Update your contact details with the PSA's Membership Section (updatemyinfo@psa.co.za) to ensure that you receive all news.

The PSA effectively represents the full spectrum of the South African population and lives by the values of **LOYALTY, TRANSPARENCY, RESPECT, ETHICAL CONDUCT, CONSISTENCY and SERVICE EXCELLENCE!**

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PSA membership application

Public Servants Association of South Africa (NPC)
Reg No 1942/015415/08

In terms of the POPI Act, 4 of 2013, the PSA will only use the information provided on this application form for the intended purpose related to membership management
The PSA Privacy Policy is available on the PSA website (www.psa.co.za).
By taking up membership, I agree to the said Policy.



* COMPULSORY FIELDS

PERSONAL INFORMATION

PLEASE INDICATE YOUR CHOICE WITH A ☒

DEPARTMENT / EMPLOYER *			
TITLE (DR, MR, MRS, MS) *		PERSAL / SALARY NUMBER *	
SURNAME *			INITIALS <input type="text"/>
FIRST NAMES *			
IDENTITY NUMBER *		DATE OF BIRTH	DD MM YYYY
CELL PHONE *	TELEPHONE	FAX NO	
EMAIL ADDRESS			
METHOD OF PAYMENT *	STOP ORDER (SALARY DEDUCTION) <input type="checkbox"/> DEBIT ORDER (BANK DEDUCTION) <input type="checkbox"/> (Noting that the Agency Fee will also be payable in this instance)		

MEMBER'S BANKING DETAILS (only when debit-order payment option is chosen)

BANK NAME		BRANCH CODE	
ACCOUNT NO		ACCOUNT TYPE	
ACCOUNT HOLDER			

CONSENT

I consent to the PSA marketing products, services and special offers to me. The PSA may share my personal information, within the PSA and the businesses that provide special advantages to PSA members, for marketing purposes. The PSA may also contact me for research purposes.

☐ YES ☐ NO

SALARY STOP-ORDER COMMENCEMENT DATE: _____

I, the undersigned, hereby apply for membership of the PSA (Public Servants Association of South Africa) and authorise and request the Accounting Officer of my employer to deduct the applicable PSA Membership Fee (as approved by the PSA Board of Directors) from my salary as membership fee, starting from the STOP-ORDER COMMENCEMENT DATE, and thereafter to continue such monthly deductions until my further written notice.

I UNDERSTAND THAT IN TERMS OF SECTION 13(3) OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS ACT, 1995 THIS STOP-ORDER MAY ONLY BE REVOKED BY THE GIVING OF THREE MONTHS' (ONE MONTH IN THE CASE OF NON-PUBLIC SERVANTS) WRITTEN NOTICE TO MY EMPLOYER AND THE PSA.

I understand that membership fees are due to and collectable by the PSA while I am a member of the PSA.

BANK DEBIT-ORDER COMMENCEMENT DATE: _____

I, the undersigned, hereby apply for membership of the PSA (Public Servants Association of South Africa) requesting and authorising you at the same time to deduct from my account at the above bank the applicable PSA Membership Fee (as approved by the PSA Board of Directors), which covers my membership fee to the PSA, starting from the DEBIT-ORDER COMMENCEMENT DATE and continue deducting said amount monthly on theth day of each month thereafter until further my written notice.

SIGNATURE *

DATE *

RECRUITER (NOT PSA STAFF MEMBER)

PSA MEMBERSHIP NO *		TAX NO *	
IDENTITY NO *		CELL PHONE	
INITIALS & SURNAME			
POSTAL ADDRESS *		POSTAL CODE	
EMAIL ADDRESS			
BANK NAME *		BRANCH CODE	
ACCOUNT NO *		ACCOUNT TYPE	
ACCOUNT HOLDER			

PLEASE NOTE THAT NO HONORARIUM CAN BE PAID WITHOUT A VALID TAX NUMBER. THE HONORARIUM WILL BE PAID DIRECTLY INTO YOUR BANK ACCOUNT.

NOTE: THE PSA WILL ASSIST MEMBERS (REPRESENTATION, FINANCIALLY, OTHERWISE) ON CONDITION THAT THE CAUSE OF ACTION FOR WHICH ASSISTANCE IS SOUGHT AROSE AFTER THE PSA'S ACCEPTANCE OF APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP.

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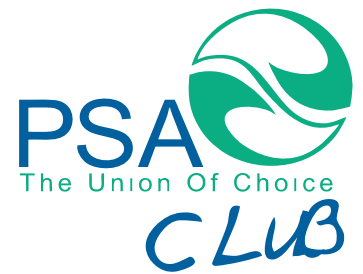


WEEK NO *

OFFICE DATE STAMP

WEEKLY REPORT ID

PSA CLUB LINE: 0860 021 067



UPDATE MY DETAILS:

PLEASE INDICATE YOUR CHOICE WITH A ☒

☐ CELL PHONE NUMBER ☐ EMAIL ADDRESS ☐ NEW PSA MEMBERSHIP CARD

*Will be posted to address indicated by member on this form

PSA MEMBERSHIP NUMBER OR ID NUMBER
PERSAL / EMPLOYEE NUMBER
INITIALS SURNAME
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Understanding your PSA structure

Country-wide member structures (on national and sectoral level) are the link between the PSA and its members. These structures mirror the current structures for collective bargaining and offer direction, thereby ensuring the protection and promotion of the rights and interests of members.

The PSA's Board of Directors (BOD) on 29 March 2017 resolved that in terms of the *Labour Relations Act* or an Organisational Rights agreement, a group will be entitled to elect five shop stewards. The Board may, on good cause shown, establish such a group as a branch.

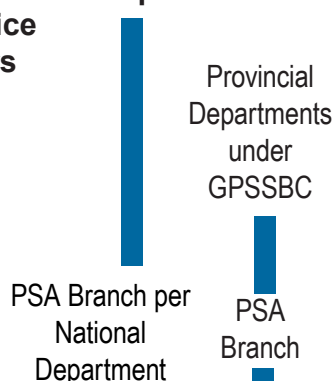
These structures have been established in all provinces to promote the organisation of members, obtaining their mandates, and improving communication with members.

Details of this extensive network of committees and branches are available from the PSA Head Office as well as any of the twelve PSA Provincial Offices.

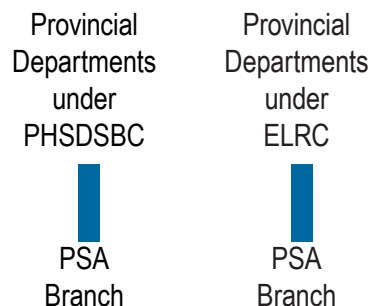
It is important to understand PSA member structures. In addition, you should be involved in these structures as active members can provide timeous, informed mandates, and ensure that skilled workplace representatives are elected.

**Branch for Associate
Members:
Public Service
Pensioners**

**National
Departments**



**Provincial Administrations
(each with several separate
Provincial Departments)**



**Parastatals/
Organs of
State**



Sub-structures for communication to grassroots level

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Join the PSA *WhatsApp* channel!

STAY INFORMED!

Members can now receive important PSA updates, news, and information directly on their cellphone through the PSA's official *WhatsApp* channel!

By joining the PSA *WhatsApp* channel, you will enjoy:

Real-time updates: Stay informed about the latest developments affecting public servants.

Convenient access: Receive announcements and news.

Ballots: Participate in ballots where members' mandate is required.

Direct communication: Be part of a platform that keeps you engaged with PSA activities and services.

HOW TO JOIN

Follow the link to the official PSA *WhatsApp* channel:

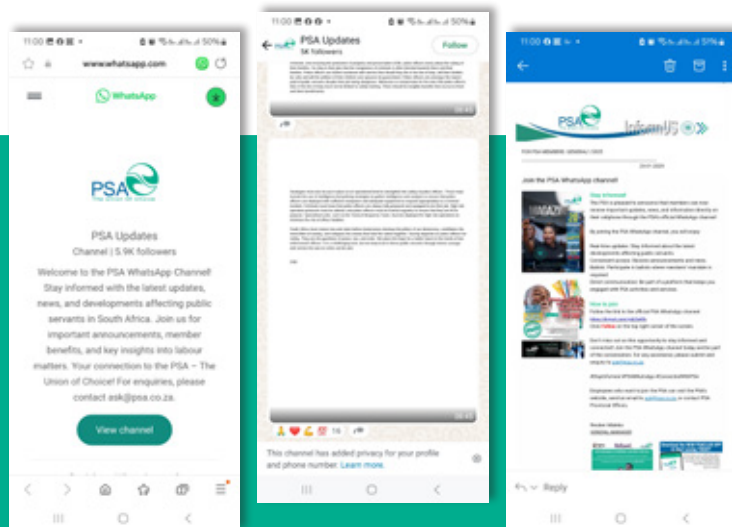
<https://tinyurl.com/ydz3s49v>

Click FOLLOW on the top right corner of the screen.

Don't miss out on this opportunity to stay informed and connected! Join the PSA *WhatsApp* channel today! For any assistance, please submit your enquiry to ask@psa.co.za.



JOIN THE PSA *WhatsApp* CHANNEL ON YOUR PHONE TODAY!



CLICK ON LINK



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#StayInformed #PSAWhatsApp #ConnectedWithPSA

SCAN QR CODE
TO JOIN AND
FOLLOW PSA



Building a sustainable future

#YouthMonth2025

By **Madoda Maxakana** – PSA acting National Manager

In Youth Month commemorated in June, the PSA honours the young people of South Africa for their unwavering resilience, creativity, and potential.

This year marks the 49th anniversary of the 16 June 1976 student uprising in Soweto and will be commemorated under the theme **Accelerating Youth Economic Emancipation for a Sustainable Future**. This theme highlights the role of young people in driving sustainable development and fostering environmental stewardship.

The PSA acknowledges the challenges the youth face in modern South Africa - from high unemployment rates, drug abuse, crime, and lack of access to quality education and healthcare. Despite these challenges, the country sees a generation that is determined to rise above adversity. Youth Month serves as a platform to recognise and empower the youth, highlighting their ability to create meaningful change in their communities and workplaces.

The PSA recognises the importance of actively engaging and empowering young people in the labour movement. The PSA is committed to advancing the rights of public servants, but the youth must be at the forefront of this movement. The PSA believes that for public service to truly thrive, young public servants must play a central role in shaping its future. As the Union of Choice, the PSA offers young workers a platform where their voices are heard, their rights are defended, and their futures are prioritised. Young public-sector employees are encouraged to join the PSA, not just as members, but as active contributors who can help drive positive change, advocate for their colleagues, and create a more just society.

Youth Month 2025 also highlights the importance of youth engagement in unions with discussions about the role of unions in supporting young workers and ensuring that their needs are addressed. It is an opportunity to inspire the next generation of union leaders who will stand up for the rights of workers and a fair and equitable society.



The PSA reaffirms the Union's commitment to building a movement that resonates with young workers. The future of South Africa depends on the empowerment and involvement of youth in all spheres of society, including the labour movement. Whilst the challenges may seem overwhelming at times, the youth is encouraged to persist with the knowledge that they have the power to make a difference: Their voices matter, their contributions are valuable, and their future is full of possibilities.

The PSA will support the youth as they navigate the path toward success. The PSA is committed to ensuring that their rights are protected, and their potential is realised.

Public Service Day

Government of National Unity impact on public-sector unions

Public Service Day is an annual occasion that acknowledges the efforts of public servants in delivering essential services to citizens. As South Africa navigates a new political landscape under a Government of National Unity (GNU), the 2025 commemoration carries significant implications for the public sector and unions.

GNU role in public administration

The formation of a GNU, aimed at fostering stability and inclusive governance, brings together political parties with differing ideologies and policy approaches. Whilst this model of governance seeks to unify efforts in addressing national challenges, its impact on the public-sector workforce and the labour movement is of critical concern. An immediate concern is the potential for policy shifts in areas such as wage negotiations, job security, and public-service restructuring. A government composed of multiple parties may struggle to present a unified stance on labour-related matters, leading to extended negotiations and policy uncertainty. Unions must remain vigilant in holding government accountable to ensure that workers' rights are not compromised in pursuit of political compromises.

Challenges and opportunities for unions

Unions representing public servants, including the PSA, play a crucial role in advocating for fair labour practices, protecting workers' rights, and ensuring adequate working conditions. However, under a GNU, policy decisions affecting public servants are likely to be shaped by a broader coalition of interests, potentially leading to opportunities and challenges for unions. A GNU presents an opportunity for increased engagement between unions and government representatives across a wider political spectrum. This may allow for a more consultative approach to policy making, where unions can contribute to discussions on labour law reforms, wage agreements, and working conditions.

The effectiveness of such engagements will depend on government's willingness to recognise and respect the role of unions as key stakeholders in public administration. Prolonged decision-making processes could hinder timely resolutions to critical labour issues. With various political influences at play, unions may find it challenging to navigate competing interests and maintain effective negotiations for better wages, job security, and benefits for public servants. The risk of political instability further complicates long-term planning and labour relations in the public sector.

Strong union advocacy

Public-sector unions must adapt to the evolving political environment by strengthening advocacy efforts and mobilising members to remain proactive in labour discourse. Collaboration with other labour organisations and civil-society groups could amplify their influence in shaping policies that directly impact workers. Unions must leverage legal avenues to ensure that collective bargaining agreements are upheld, and that workers' rights are not eroded under the guise of political compromise. Unions should engage in continuous education and awareness campaigns for their members, equipping them with knowledge to navigate potential changes under the GNU. Transparent communication with members about developments and strategic actions is crucial in maintaining unity and trust amongst public-sector employees.

Commitment to public servants

In commemorating Public Service Day, it is essential to recognise the indispensable role of public servants in maintaining governance, stability, and service delivery. The GNU should prioritise the well-being of its workforce by fostering an environment that values fair labour practices and social justice. Public-sector unions, in turn, must remain steadfast in their mission to protect workers' rights and navigate the complexities of a coalition government to ensure a fair and equitable public-service landscape.

The PSA, as a leading voice for public servants, will continue to advocate for members and engage constructively with government to secure a sustainable future for the workforce. The road ahead may be uncertain, but the PSA's commitment to uphold the dignity and rights of public servants remains unwavering. The GNU must recognise that a well-supported and motivated public-service workforce is essential for effective governance and national progress. The evolving political landscape should not detract from the fundamental rights of workers but rather reinforce the need for strong, independent unions that can champion the interests of those who dedicate their careers to serving the nation.

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Public Service Day in South Africa: *Reflection on progress*

By **Olivia Mashigo** – PSA Provincial Manager:
Gauteng - Johannesburg

Public Service Day, celebrated globally on 23 June, honours the dedication of public servants and their role in societal development. In South Africa, this day holds particular importance, given the country's history of entrenched racial and economic inequalities in the public sector with discrimination, unfair wages, and limited opportunities.

The country's democratic transition in 1994 marked a turning point, aiming to rebuild the public service as a force for equity, inclusivity, and accountability. In addition, part of the transformation was the implementation of progressive labour laws.

The *Labour Relations Act of 1995* guaranteed workers' rights to fair labour practices, collective bargaining, and protection from unfair dismissal. Complementary laws such as the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act*, the *Employment Equity Act*, and the *Public Service Act* established minimum employment standards, promoted workplace diversity, and ensured ethical service delivery.

These legislative milestones have helped to create a more representative and inclusive public service. Women and previously marginalised groups now occupy leadership roles, and public servants play a critical role in delivering essential services such as education, healthcare, safety and security, and infrastructure development.

Challenges such as corruption, inefficiency, and labour disputes, however, persist and undermine public trust in government institutions. Balancing fiscal constraints with the need to attract skilled personnel remains an ongoing issue.

Public Service Day is an opportunity to celebrate public servants and reflect on the journey from a divided past to a more equitable present. Public Service Day is a time to recognise achievements, address persistent challenges, and recommit to strengthening the public service as a cornerstone of democracy and social justice. By investing in professional development, ethical leadership, and robust oversight, South Africa can ensure its public sector continues to contribute meaningfully to the nation's progress and unity.

In service of public-sector employees



Heart of healthcare

#NursesDay2025

By **Charles Ngubane**: PSA Provincial Manager:
KwaZulu-Natal – Pietermaritzburg

Mahatma Gandhi said that “the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” That is exactly what nurses do in being the heart of healthcare that service communities to the best of their ability.

Nurses are integral to the healthcare industry. They play a vital role in the healthcare system, including providing care for patients, promoting health, prevention of illnesses, and treatment. According to the World Health Organisation, there are 29 million nurses worldwide. Nurses are thus the largest healthcare profession in the world. They often provide the first and sometimes the only healthcare to those in need. The PSA honours the unsung heroes of healthcare for their efforts in providing quality healthcare.

According to recent data issued by the South African Nursing Council, the nurse-to-patient ratio in South Africa is one nurse to every 218 patients. This indicates a significant shortage of nurses and a high patient load per nurse. There is a shortage of nurses owing to various reasons such as death, nurses being trained but no posts, aging workforce reaching retirement age, failure to attract the youth to the nursing profession, the country's growing population, maldistribution between urban and rural areas, healthcare system challenges, and working conditions. This shortage has adverse consequences for the South Africa population in need of healthcare.

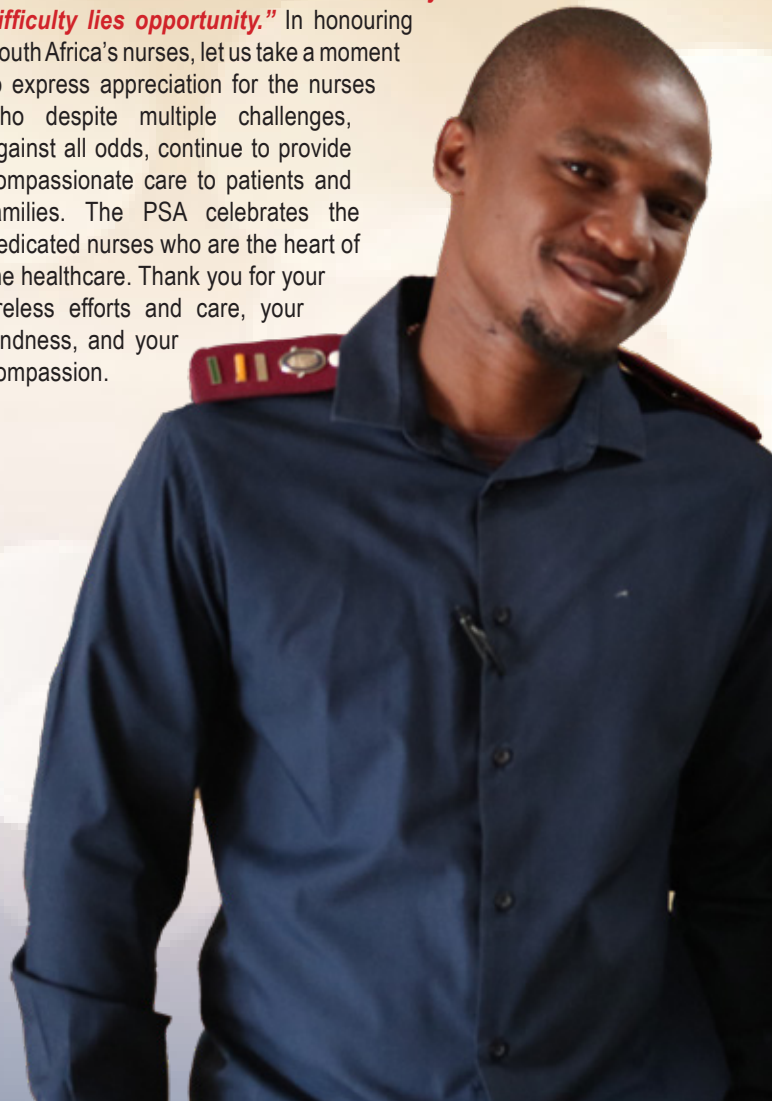
Nurses face many workplace challenges, such as a lack of supplies and equipment, patient overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, unfamiliar technology, ill-treatment, a lack of promotion, unsafe work environments including criminal attacks, and emotional challenges and stress they may experience whilst caring for patients.

To address the challenges nurses face, the PSA advocates for government to improve infrastructure, employ more nurses to reduce workload and burnout, optimise scheduling to minimise overtime, and ensure adequate coverage across all shifts. Nurses should be given opportunities to study and receive ongoing support and training to stay in step with clinical practice and technology, especially in the current digital era.



Nurses should further be involved in the development and implementation of healthcare policies, including the National Health Insurance.

Albert Einstein said: **“In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity.”** In honouring South Africa's nurses, let us take a moment to express appreciation for the nurses who despite multiple challenges, against all odds, continue to provide compassionate care to patients and families. The PSA celebrates the dedicated nurses who are the heart of the healthcare. Thank you for your tireless efforts and care, your kindness, and your compassion.



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Nurses' essential role in South Africa's healthcare system was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when they risked their lives to save others.

Despite their crucial role, nurses continue to face numerous workplace challenges that the PSA actively addresses. Persistent challenges that negatively impact on nurses include:

- **Workplace safety:** Nurses often face threats of workplace violence, a lack of security, and exposure to infectious diseases. Attacks on nurses in public hospitals have increased. The PSA continuously pursues safe working environments, improved security measures, and the enforcement of health and safety regulations. The PSA has actively engaged with the Department of Health and hospital managements to improve security at healthcare facilities and ensure nurses are protected whilst performing their duties.
- **Severe staff shortages:** The ongoing shortage of healthcare personnel places an unbearable burden on nurses, leading to burnout and diminished patient care. Many nurses are forced to work double shifts owing to a lack of personnel, contributing to fatigue and stress. The PSA calls for urgent interventions to increase staffing levels, permanent employment of contract nurses, and a fair workload distribution to prevent exploitation.

- **Inadequate compensation and delayed payments:** Despite their vital role, many nurses receive salaries that do not match the demands of their jobs. Additionally, there have been repeated instances of delayed salary payments, non-payment of overtime, and a lack of proper allowances. The PSA persistently negotiates for fair remuneration, salary increases, and improved benefits to ensure that nurses are properly compensated. The PSA also intervenes when salary payments are delayed.
- **Lack of resources:** Public healthcare facilities are often plagued by shortages of essential medical supplies, outdated equipment, and insufficient support structures. Many hospitals and clinics lack even the most basic supplies, such as gloves, masks, and beds, making it difficult for nurses to provide adequate care. The PSA advocates for increased funding and investment in the public health sector to provide nurses with the tools they need to perform their duties.
- **Mental health and well-being:** The emotional strain of nursing, coupled with long working hours and high-pressure environments, contributes to stress, anxiety, and depression amongst nurses. The lack of psychological support services exacerbates these mental-health struggles. The PSA pursues policies that promote mental-health support, better working conditions, and work-life balance. The PSA also advocates for accessible counselling services for healthcare workers.

PSA's commitment to nurses

The PSA is unwavering in the Union's efforts to address these issues through **collective bargaining** (advocating for better salaries, improved working conditions, and policies that benefit healthcare workers); **support** (assisting members in cases of unfair labour practices, disciplinary disputes, and workplace grievances); **policy advocacy** (engaging with government to influence healthcare policies that protect and empower nurses); **security initiatives** (pressuring government to improve security at healthcare facilities); and **awareness campaigns** (highlighting the struggles of nurses to garner public support and drive meaningful change). Whilst taking on these challenges is critical, it is equally important to celebrate the dedication, resilience, and compassion of nurses.

The PSA urges government, healthcare institutions, and the public to join in ensuring that nurses receive the respect, protection, and resources they need. Addressing their challenges will improve their working conditions and enhance the quality of healthcare in South Africa.

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In service of public-sector employees



Coffee klatch:

Musings of a group of pensioners

("Coffee klatch" comes from the German word, "kaffeeklatsch," which translates to coffee (kaffee) + gossip (klatsch). It refers to a group of friends getting together over a cup of coffee)

By **Stan Davis*** in collaboration with **Rob Moody**

It was on a Thursday morning that the group of retired government employees, also known as pensioners met, unofficially of course, at their favourite coffee shop. The newest member was actually the oldest person there. He had moved to this seaside town (also called "**semigration**"), to be far away from the hustle and bustle of the big metro cities.

The musing started when this oldest member of the group asked the others about their experiences of the reality of losing their status and rank on retirement after careers, often spanning some 40 years, to find overnight being regarded as a non-entity. Some had felt the pangs of this disillusionment when they retired, others were enraptured with all the time they now had to themselves. Particularly, as they no longer had to endure the stresses that had been part of their daily work life. Most admitted that this novelty disappeared after some time.

Interlaced in this conversation where those that wished that they could have been able to afford going on retirement earlier whilst others wished they could have continued working beyond 65. From the conversation that followed, it was evident that retirement and how it was handled, differed considerably from person to person. A retired woodwork teacher interjected that for him, retirement was like a well-earned holiday giving him time to expand his creative side. He was now making a variety of furniture and children's toys from off-cut wood sourced from a nearby factory. This provided him with an additional income to supplement his pension, which he found was reducing in real terms.

Similar stories were related, with some group members getting involved in social work, others branching out into entirely new careers based on previously suppressed desires. It, however, was a member who had retired some ten years ago who put a different perspective on retirement. Since he retired, his personal life had been affected in a number with his children suffering health setbacks and financial difficulties.

It was evident that most put the welfare of their adult children first and foremost, and even in their old age, were willing to endure hardships for them.

The elder pensioner who had started the conversation offered some sobering wisdom, although it was too late for those present. To enjoy a financially stress-free life after retirement it would be necessary to start at the very beginning of one's career to get the benefits of cheap premiums and also to introduce it as an extra to the normal pension benefits. From this, it emerged that many regretted that they had not adequately considered the impact on their pension when taking decisions and making career choices in their earlier years. These, often made in haste, seldom accounted for the then-unrealised fact, that aging was generally accompanied by an increase in ill health, and often, medication required would not be fully covered by medical aid.

The conversation drifted to the value of pensions, with most agreeing that their monthly pensions were no longer adequate, given inflation, rising medical costs, and annual increases that were far below the real inflation rate. The youngest pensioner proposed that, to counteract the loss of value of the pension, pension benefits should be adjusted in line with salary adjustments. However, once again, the words of wisdom echoed from the elder pensioner, reminding everyone that pensioners cannot threaten to go on a strike if their benefits are not structured in a manner that helps them to beat inflation.

There are three morals to be drawn from the musings of this retired bunch. Firstly, plan for your retirement from the day you start working. It is too late to start planning for it when it is just around the corner. Secondly, be careful of decisions you make early in your career that may negatively impact on your pension. Whilst your retirement day may appear far in the future, it is in reality just around the corner. Often there is just not enough time for your pension to recover from decisions made in haste in your younger days. Thirdly, look at retirement as being a new lease on life. Enjoy it to its fullest while you can. **Remember, there is life after retirement.**



***Stan Davis** is the Vice-Chairperson of the Western Cape Pensioner Committee. At the age of 88, he is the oldest Office Bearer in the PSA with energy and enthusiasm surpassing many of his younger colleagues. He "semi-emigrated" from Pretoria to George and now lives in Plettenberg Bay, where he regularly partakes in "Coffee Klatches" with other pensioners. (standvs73@gmail.com)

Gauteng Pensioners News

The Gauteng Committee of the PSA's Branch for Public Service Pensioners met towards the end of 2024, with guest speaker, Isaac Letlape from the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF) providing key updates. He explained the GEPF Board structure and the new two-pot system launched in August 2024, which is already processing claims. The GEPF maintains a 60-day turnaround time for pension issues and is addressing past challenges. It was also announced that pensioners who retired on or before 1 April 2024 will receive a 2.9% pension increase from 1 April 2025, whilst those who retired after that date will receive a proportionate increase. This adjustment is based on inflation and exceeds the 75% CPI requirement set by GEPF Law and Rules.

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- ✓ **Premiums & Increases** – Understand how much you'll be paying now and in the future. Will your premiums increase over time? Make sure your cover remains affordable.
- ✓ **Coverage Specifics** – Does the policy cover accidental deaths, particularly those resulting from risky activities? If you live far from home, does it include repatriation to return your body to your family?
- ✓ **Additional Benefits** – What extra benefits does your policy include? Services like airtime vouchers, grocery or transport assistance, and memorial support can make a significant difference.

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Earth Day and World Environment Day

How does climate change and hybrid work affect collective bargaining and conditions of service?

The fast-changing world of work in South Africa is facing challenges brought on by temperatures rising faster than the global average. **Climate change is fundamentally altering labour relations, workplace safety, and employment conditions, particularly for public sector employees who provide essential services.**

These changes exert pressure on labour and employers to find solutions to navigate the new landscape. Devastating effects of climate change are evident in various parts of the country, including Gauteng, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape, Western Cape, and North West, experiencing increased floods, droughts, heatwaves, and wildfires. Extreme temperatures, air pollution, and climate-induced stress negatively impact public servants' health with a loss in productivity. Rising temperatures contribute to heat exhaustion, decreased focus, and increased sick leave, particularly for outdoor workers in public infrastructure, policing, and emergency response.

In 2023, the International Labour Organisation stated that extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, wildfires, and hurricanes will damage business assets, transport routes and industrial and agricultural infrastructure, leading to job losses. In just seven years, up to 3.8% of total working hours worldwide could be lost to climate-induced high temperatures.

The PSA has cautioned that extreme weather events, increased health risks, and changing work environments necessitate the inclusion of climate-related contingencies in collective agreements. These should address heat-stress protocols, air-quality management, remote-work policies, and emergency-response measures. Government employees, especially those in healthcare, emergency services, and public-infrastructure maintenance, face heightened exposure to climate-related hazards, making climate adaptation a labour rights issue.

Collective bargaining must evolve to ensure worker protections, including expanded leave options, occupational health and safety measures, and infrastructure resilience to protect workplaces.

Climate change presents a dual challenge. It disrupts industries reliant on natural resources whilst creating opportunities in the green economy. The public sector, including departments responsible for water, energy, agriculture, and environmental management, will play a critical role in climate adaptation and mitigation. The PSA welcomes the *Climate Change Act of 2024* as a necessary step toward sustainability, emphasising that its implementation must be equitable and worker-centric and must not lead to job losses without re-skilling measures, and workplaces must adapt to protect workers from climate hazards.

The PSA also calls for government accountability in reducing the public sector's carbon footprint while maintaining fair labour practices. Any climate policy must include strong social protections for affected workers and government investment in sustainable job creation.

The PSA advocates for a just transition that safeguards public-sector employment and provides re-skilling opportunities for workers affected by shifts in government priorities toward sustainability. Government must ensure that climate policies do not result in unfair retrenchments and instead lead to expanded employment in climate resilience initiatives.



In service of public-sector employees

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The PSA stresses the need for climate-responsive labour policies, such as enhanced protective gear, climate allowances, and additional paid leave for workers impacted by climate-related disasters.

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 Images: Getty Images and Unsplashd

The PSA stresses the need for climate-responsive labour policies, such as enhanced protective gear, climate allowances, and additional paid leave for workers impacted by climate-related disasters. Government buildings and service delivery sites must be climate-proofed to ensure worker safety and uninterrupted public services.

The hybrid work model has introduced new dynamics into collective bargaining, particularly concerning working conditions, remote work allowances, and work-life balance. The PSA continues to push for equitable hybrid work policies that ensure that public-sector employees are not burdened with additional costs such as electricity, Internet, and office equipment. Public servants must also be protected from excessive surveillance and unrealistic productivity expectations when working remotely. Connectivity, digital security, and the right to disconnect must be part of labour discussions, ensuring that remote work does not erode labour rights and fair compensation.

The PSA acknowledges that the model is not a one-size-fits-all solution for public-sector employees. Whilst administrative and policy roles can benefit from remote work, front-line services such as healthcare, law enforcement, immigration control, and emergency management require physical presence. Hybrid work should be implemented where feasible, but infrastructure, technology, and policy frameworks must support its adoption to prevent exclusion or overburdening certain workers.

Special consideration must also be made for workers who lack access to reliable electricity, stable Internet, and safe remote working environments.

The PSA calls on public sector workplaces to adopt climate-sensitive occupational health measures, including cooling infrastructure, improved air filtration, and hazard pay for workers exposed to extreme environmental conditions. The PSA will be actively integrating climate resilience and hybrid work considerations into collective bargaining. This includes advocating for climate-responsive occupational health policies ensuring worker safety; improved ventilation and cooling systems in government buildings; fair remote-work policies; green workplace initiatives to support sustainability and mitigate climate risks; and training and re-skilling programs to prepare public servants for new roles in climate adaptation and mitigation.

The PSA urges public-sector employees to in their workplaces and communities pursue sustainable practices. Simple actions such as reducing paper use, conserving energy, and supporting climate-friendly policies make a difference. The PSA calls on government to prioritise a just transition for public servants and ensure that climate policies do not compromise job security, working conditions, or fair labour standards. Climate justice must include worker justice, and the PSA will continue to champion policies that protect both the environment and public-sector employees.

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