

PSA demands tracking devices on vehicles after 14 social workers hijacked

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PSA demands tracking devices on vehicles after 14 social workers hijacked News / 21 February 2020, 8:17pm / Ziyanda Mgandela Durban - The Public Servants Association has voiced concerns about the safety of field social workers employed by the Department of Social Development in KZN. This was after reports of 14 hijackings of social workers on duty in the last six months. The PSA said as far back as October 2017 it had tabled the matter at the department's labour relations forums requesting that the department installs trackers on the vehicles. PSA provincial manager Mlungisi Ndlovu said during the hijackings employees belongings were stolen and they were not compensated for their losses. "The Department still refuses to install tracking devices in these government vehicles and to obtain comprehensive insurance cover. Employees have also not received counselling from the Department," said Ndlovu. A victim of a hijacking in January said two of his colleagues had already been victims. He said criminals were not only targeting them on the street but also at the office. On February 8, he said there was a break in at their office; which suggested to him that the department was an easy target to criminals. "They locked the security guards in the bathroom and stole work equipment inside before they took the cars outside. These cars don't have trackers, I think that's why criminals are constantly targeting them. "I'm currently attending sessions with a psychologist because of the trauma from the incident, but she has referred me to a psychiatrist and prescribed antidepressants and other medication. This is all of this is at my expense, the department refuses to pay," he said . His greatest fear is that these incidents are affecting their ability to perform their duties and reach out to people in need because he said they fear for their lives. KZN Department of Social Development spokesperson Mhlabunzima Memela said they were aware and concerned about the hijackings which had a negative impact on service delivery. He said MEC for Social Development Nonhlanhla Khoza had taken her concern about the issue to cabinet. "It's true that department vehicles have no trackers. The issue is currently being looked at by the entire provincial government. Emanating from the MEC's initiative about the issue, the cabinet resolved to appoint the team to develop a plan to deal with the hijacking challenge, since this is an issue that affects the entire province and requires an integrated strategy," Memela said. In cases of hijackings, he said the department assisted employees with psycho-social support and arranged psychiatrists. "The Department is mindful of the effects of the hijackings to staff and there is a wellness intervention plan that seeks to address the effects that these incidents have on staff. We also urged the employee to be in contact with relevant units in the department so that his matter can be fast tracked. The office of the MEC is also open to assist in this matter," Memela said. He said the department was planning to meet with all staff who have been hijacked. The Independent on Saturday.