



**MEDIA RELEASE**                      **COVID-19: PSA calls for clarity on Western Cape Department of Health memo**

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**EMBARGO**                                None

**ENQUIRIES**                              communication@psa.co.za

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is shocked by the recent position taken by the Western Cape Department of Health (WCDOH) regarding the issue of “*isolation and quarantining of contacts of confirmed cases of COVID-19*”.

In a memorandum issued earlier this month, the Provincial Health Department confirmed its stance to call back all staff deemed to be asymptomatic (in isolation) or in quarantine in terms of *Circular H221/2021*. This despite the National Department of Health (NDOH) issuing a media statement in December 2021 recalling the “*Circular on revised Contact Tracing, Quarantine and Isolation protocols*”.

Following an enquiry by the PSA, the Department stated that it stands by its decision simply because it does not recognise the media statement as a retraction of the official *National Department of Health Circular* issued on 23 December 2021. The PSA finds this position troubling, as it is contrary to what was stipulated by the Head of Department of Health, Dr Keith Cloete, at the recent Western Cape Vaccination SteerCom Roll-Out meeting on 11 January 2022. Dr Cloete explained that the National Department of Health recalled the most recent *Circular* related to quarantine and isolation to ensure that from a policy perspective the recommendations contained therein are aligned to Disaster Management Regulations.

The PSA acknowledges the health-related expertise of the Department but calls on the WCDOH to allow for the necessary legislative processes to run their course and adhere to the rule of law. No province can afford to operate independently if COVID-19 is to be defeated. The PSA has called for an urgent meeting with WCDOH, including all trade unions admitted to the Western Cape Public Health and Social Development Sectoral Bargaining Chamber (PHSDSBC) to address this matter. PSA members are encouraged to adhere to the current policy protocols until this matter has been settled with the WCDOH.

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