

MEDIA RELEASE **COVID-19: PSA concerned about rising infections in Eastern Cape schools**

DATE 24 June 2020

EMBARGO None

ENQUIRIES communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) is becoming increasingly concerned about the increase of COVID-19 infections in the Eastern Cape, especially in the OR Tambo region.

The PSA received reports that some 180 learners of Makaula Senior Secondary School in Mount Frere have tested positive for the virus. The PSA's efforts to engage the School's principal failed, amidst allegations that the School was not adhering to COVID-19 regulations, including social distancing with small hostel rooms accommodating almost 30 learners each.

At Mangokone Senior Secondary School in Tsolo, an employee succumbed to COVID-19 and the School was subsequently closed yesterday. There is concern that the employee has relatives at the school, who live in the same household and likely to be infected. Just 12 days since the re-opening of schools in the province, more than 100 schools have been closed owing to confirmed COVID-19 cases amongst learners and staff. Currently, schools are closing at a rate of some five schools per-day are owing to new infection cases. School governing bodies have appealed to parents not to send their children to school and have approached the Department of Basic Education to close schools. Failure to maintain social distancing and to correctly use personal protective equipment will most likely result in even more disruptions to the academic year.

The PSA repeats the Union's calls on government to enhance its preparedness and contingency plans to curb the spread of infections. The PSA, whilst making every effort to ensure the health and safety of its 245 000 members, calls on the MEC for Education in the Eastern Cape to provide leadership and heed the call of closing schools in the Eastern Cape. Failure to take such steps and to act swiftly on reported infections may result in criminal charges related to premeditated murder being laid against him.

END

