

MEDIA RELEASE	COVID-19: Public servants face numerous challenges in the line of duty
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is aware that public servants classified under essential services have faced numerous challenges in the execution of their critical duties related to the containment of the COVID-19 pandemic that is increasingly impacting on South Africans. It was already reported that several healthcare officials have tested positive for COVID-19.

A serious shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, gloves and sanitisers in especially Gauteng, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal is a grim reality across the country in many departments rendering essential services to the public. This includes various Health institutions where public servants are at the forefront of the battle against the pandemic. In addition, some of these institutions are struggling with water supply, which poses a further risk to not only the employees but also members of the public who depend on these intuitions for much-needed services. The PSA's interventions in this regard have yielded some positive results.

The issuing of travel permits to allow designated employees to travel to work also presented challenges. At the Department of Correctional Services in Mthatha many employees did not receive the required permits. This situation left already understaffed Correctional facilities vulnerable. The PSA engaged the Area Commissioner who confirmed the challenges and gave the assurance that the matter will be rectified.

Many essential services employees across the country who depend on public transport have since the start of lockdown been faced with waiting in long queues for transport to shuttle them to and from work. Many of them were left stranded, especially when having to return to their homes. Despite getting home very late, they were expected to report for duty the next day. Crowded taxi ranks and long queues render social distancing impossible, which in turn, means that if exposed to the virus these workers will also expose their families, colleagues and members of the public to infection. The PSA has requested the urgent intervention of the Minister of Transport to find ways to address this challenge.

The country is facing an unprecedented crisis, but these circumstances should not endanger the lives of especially workers who as pillars of society are tasked to render critical services. The PSA calls on government to ensure that it complies with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* in this regard. The PSA will continue to closely monitor the situation. The PSA would also like sincerely thank all workers who remain on duty during this crisis to serve the public. Their dedication and sacrifices are not going unnoticed.

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