

MEDIA RELEASE GEMS: PSA not satisfied with unilateral changes and inadequate response to workers' demands

DATE 25 March 2026

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is not satisfied with the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS) providing only a partial response to the demands submitted by organised labour whilst also implementing changes affecting members before meaningful engagement has taken place.

GEMS recently confirmed that it reviewed the memorandum of demands submitted by unions in February 2026. However, instead of concluding engagements and addressing concerns comprehensively, GEMS proceeded with actions that directly impact members, including adjustments linked to the 2026 contribution increase and the opening of a special option-switching window.

The PSA views this conduct by GEMS as disrespectful to the collective bargaining process. It is unacceptable for GEMS to take unilateral decisions that have financial implications for public servants whilst engagement with organised labour is still outstanding. This behaviour undermines trust, transparency, and the principle of good faith that should govern engagements between GEMS and unions. The explanation by GEMS that healthcare inflation exceeds consumer inflation does not absolve it of its responsibility to consult fully with unions before implementing any decisions that affect members' financial well-being. The decision to open a special option-selection window for *Tanzanite One* members until 9 April 2026, whilst helpful to some, is another example of changes rolled out without finalised engagement. This unilateral implementation, even if presented as relief, occurs in a context of unresolved labour demands and growing worker dissatisfaction.

The PSA calls on GEMS to suspend all unilateral decisions and implementation of changes until formal engagement has been concluded with unions. GEMS committed to meeting with unions before the end of March 2026 and there is thus no logic in rushing this issue in the last week of March. The commitment by GEMS to Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council processes, however, seems more like lip service. If GEMS is sincere, it will prioritise the urgent bilateral talks planned for the last week of March and ensure that workers' voices are meaningfully incorporated into decisions.

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