

MEDIA RELEASE Government measures to ease fuel costs: PSA calls for urgent worker-centred action

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) noted recent announcements indicating that government is exploring measures to ease the rising cost of fuel in South Africa, drawing on interventions implemented by other countries facing similar challenges.

The PSA welcomes all efforts aimed at reducing fuel costs, as high fuel prices continue to place severe financial strain on public servants and the broader working class. Fuel-price increases have a direct and immediate impact on household budgets, transport costs, food prices, and general cost-of-living pressures, further eroding incomes. Public servants, many of whom rely on private transport owing to inadequate or unsafe public transport systems, are disproportionately affected. Rising fuel prices also increase operational costs in the public service, placing additional pressure on service delivery to communities.

The PSA noted that several countries have implemented measures such as temporary fuel levy or tax reductions, targeted subsidies or rebates for workers and essential services, increased investment in alternative energy and public transport, as well as strategic fuel price stabilisation mechanisms. Whilst international examples may offer useful lessons, the PSA cautions that interventions must be sustainable, transparent, and tailored to South Africa's socio-economic realities. The PSA thus calls on government to ensure that fuel-relief measures provide immediate relief to workers and low- to middle-income households, protect wages and purchasing power, particularly upon granting a 4% salary increment. The burden must not be shifted to workers through future tax increases or austerity measures. Government must strengthen public-transport infrastructure to reduce long-term reliance on private fuel consumption.

The PSA also urges government to address structural issues in the fuel-pricing model, including taxes and levies that disproportionately affect workers, and accelerate the transition to affordable and sustainable energy options. Introduction of hybrid-working models is also a key factor that employers must consider.

The PSA reiterates that rising fuel costs are, apart from an energy issue, also a labour, economic, and social-justice issue. Any related intervention must prioritise the needs of workers, protect jobs, and safeguard public service delivery.

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