

**MEDIA RELEASE**                      **Limpopo Department of Health's R10 million wasteful expenditure: PSA calls for immediate suspension of implicated officials**

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**EMBARGO**                                None

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) calls for the immediate suspension of the Limpopo Department of Health Head of Department (HOD) and Deputy Director General (DDG), after they failed to follow the prescripts of the *Public Finance Management Act (PFMA)* when appointing a cell-phone service provider, resulting in wasteful expenditure of some R10 million.

The Department appointed MTN to provide 10 000 cell phones to be used by Field Workers. The Department, however, failed to distribute all the cell phones and distributed only 399 phones in five districts. It is alleged that the non-distribution was attributed to the lack of applications to be loaded on the cell phones, which are necessary to assist Field Workers. After the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) engaged with the Department in March 2021, the Department tried to hastily distribute the remaining cell phones, despite still not having the said applications. Subsequently, the SIU found that the invoices were not fit for the intended purpose and that the appointment of MTN did not comply with the *PFMA*, where both parties “*failed to take effective and appropriate steps to prevent, within their area of responsibility, fruitless and wasteful expenditure.*”

The three implicated officials, namely the HOD, DDG another senior official at the Department, were during 2020 identified by the PSA in the media following complaints from PSA members of their abuse of power and bullying tactics. Members working in Finance also complained of being side-lined in procurement processes. The MEC, Dr Phopi Ramathuba, did not listen to the PSA when she was asked to intervene on the basis that the allegations raised “lacked substance”. The PSA is of the view that her intervention would have prevented the Department from wasting taxpayers’ money.

The PSA welcomes the recommendations by the SIU for the HOD to face disciplinary and criminal charges, while the DDG and the senior official were to face disciplinary charges only. These implicated officials must be suspended with immediate effect while the process of charging them is underway. This will send a strong message to everyone who fails to diligently execute their responsibilities, particularly when it comes to state funds.

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