

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA: KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education in crisis and needs urgent intervention
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) calls on the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to prioritise the safety of employees after the NED Building in Pietermaritzburg failed to meet health and safety standards in December 2025.

The Department has been rocked from one scandal after another, including irregularities in the school nutrition programme, lack of learning materials for pupils, a shortage of educators, bribery claims in educator appointments, and overall poor administration.

Concerns are mounting as the Department faces ongoing criticism for its failure to address long-standing infrastructure issues in one of its administrative buildings in Pietermaritzburg. Employees have raised alarm to the PSA regarding conditions that have hindered operations. The building has only two working elevators out of four. It is further infested by rats, employees were obliged to clean as there were no cleaners, fire extinguishers were not serviced. Infrastructure is deteriorating, with exposed electrical wires and chronic neglect of the dilapidated building. These issues, amongst others, have exposed employees at potential risk. The PSA intervened and reported the matter to the Department of Employment and Labour. The building was found unsafe by a Labour Inspector and was closed.

Unsafe working conditions violate fundamental rights protected by the labour laws such as the right to a safe working environment, as stipulated in the *Occupational Health and safety Act*. Employees further have a Constitutional right to an environment that does not harm their health or well-being. The PSA welcomes the subsequent decision by the Department to place workers in other buildings, with some working from home as a temporary measure following the PSA's intervention. The PSA, however, calls on the Department to prioritise safety by finding a permanent solution such as repairing faults in the NED Building or finding an alternative building that meet safety standards to allow for displaced employees to return.

The PSA is further inundated with calls from employees who voiced serious concerns about the Department of Education's lack of communication regarding the incentivised early-retirement programme. Applications for early retirement opened 15 October 2025 and many employees submitted their applications months ago, but claim they have not received any official response, acknowledgement, or timeline for the process. The lack of formal updates has created anxiety as employees feel overlooked. The situation has caused financial stress for applicants who were planning major life transitions and are in the absence of clear timeframes left uncertain about their future. The PSA calls on the Department to provide regular feedback to applications, offer support and guidance, provide realistic timeframes, and establish proper feedback channels accessible to all.



The PSA calls on the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Education to hold a crisis meeting to address the systemic failures in the Department.

END

