

MEDIA RELEASE                      PSA: Umgeni Home Affairs a health hazard for staff and public

DATE                                      7 January 2020

EMBARGO                                None

ENQUIRIES                              communication@psa.co.za

---

The Public Servants Association (PSA) has noted media reports on employees at the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Home Affairs office in Umgeni, Durban downing tools on 3 January 2020 owing to broken air conditioners. The PSA's investigations, following a visit to the office, found that employees were working on the day in question.

Owing to broken air conditioners, as well as snakes and rats in the building, which was last serviced in 2018 by the landlord, employees are continuously feeling nauseous, dizzy and are fainting because of heat exposure and muscle pains. Employees brought this to the attention of office manager, Mr Magagula, who proposed that employees leave their work stations periodically to get fresh air. On 27 December 2019, a client collapsed owing to the excessive heat and was taken to hospital by ambulance. This was not reported to the Department of Labour.

It should be further noted that on 3 January 2020, the system was offline from 12:00 to 15:00 and it was beyond employees' control to render a service to clients. Employees have been complaining about the appalling state of the building since 2014, citing non-compliance with *the Occupational Health and Safety Act* and regulations, and subjecting PSA members to work under unsafe and uncondusive working conditions. Despite this, PSA members continued to go beyond the call of duty by working overtime even during their lunch breaks to cover work.

The PSA has requested that an inspector from Labour visit the office. Should the inspector find major non-compliance with *OHS Act* in this building, it must be shut down and the Department must provide an alternative building for employees to continue servicing the public. PSA members are committed to serving the public and the Department must ensure that this building complies with the *OHS* regulations to protect the lives of employees and the public.

On 6 January 2020, the PSA again met with office manager, Mr Magagula, to obtain a progress report on the repair of air conditioners. The feedback was that the Department has not fixed the air conditioners and the PSA now awaits a report from the Department of Labour.

END

