

**MEDIA RELEASE**                      **Messina Hospital 54% vacancy rate: PSA calls for urgent intervention**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) learnt that the visit by South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) revealed that Messina Hospital kitchen was dirty and contained rotten food and expired fruits, which was attributed to under-staffing.

The PSA has on numerous occasions called for the Department of Health to fill vacancies to ensure that service delivery is not affected. These pleas have, however, fallen on deaf ears. The Department is continually failing to demonstrate the level of commitment towards provision of quality health service to the people of Limpopo with well documented problems ranging from lack of medication, long queues and now consumption of expired food.

The PSA pointed out that it is unthinkable that the Department can expect even a minimum service delivery with an astronomical 54% vacancy rate. The Department's failure to fill vacancies negatively impacts on the provision of quality service to the public of whom the majority is vulnerable owing to either low or no income and thus not being able to afford private health care and depend on the public health-care service. In addition, the situation also affects employees who are hard pressed to carry the workload.

The PSA indicated that the obsession to cut the Public Service salary bill is detrimental to beneficiaries of services provided by state facilities and could have disastrous effects as was seen with the Esidimeni tragedy where cost became the determining factor over human rights and health consideration.

The PSA stated that the Department is sabotaging the very vision to ensure a long and healthy life for all South Africans through a consistent resolute not to fill vacant positions. The Union that represents thousands of health workers called upon the MEC for Health to urgently fill vacancies at Messina Hospital for the sake of the people of Limpopo and employees. The PSA will also table the matter in the Public Health and Social Development Sectoral Bargaining Council's Chamber to ensure that the Department takes steps to reduce the high vacancy rate that is taking its toll and all parties involved.

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