

MEDIA RELEASE PSA alarmed by conditions at Rivoni School for the Blind in Limpopo

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) calls for urgent intervention at Rivoni School for the Blind in Elim, in the Vhembe West District of Limpopo, where some 150 blind learners are reportedly being supported by a severely understaffed workforce.

The PSA has received serious concerns from employees regarding excessive working hours, inadequate staffing, and unsafe working conditions. Concerns include that only one cleaner reportedly services the entire School, working from 07:30 to 17:30, seven days a week, with only two days off per month. Only one laundry employee reportedly does laundry for all 150 learners, including blankets, and also assists with bathing learners. The School reportedly has no adequate hot-water facility, resulting in employees having to heat water using an open fire to bath learners. Only two house mothers reportedly work night shifts from 17:30 to 07:30, raising concerns about excessive hours, overtime, and applicable night-duty compensation. Only two kitchen employees reportedly prepare three meals daily for all learners, working from 06:00 to 15:00, Monday to Sunday.

Employees indicated that these concerns have been raised with the employer for years without adequate intervention. Although employees have considered collective action, they remain reluctant to abandon their duties owing to the vulnerability of the learners.

The PSA demands urgent additional staffing, an investigation into working hours, overtime and applicable night-duty allowances, and immediate attention to the School's working and safety conditions. The PSA has approached the Department of Employment and Labour with a request for an inspection and investigation into possible non-compliance with the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act* and occupational health and safety legislation.

The situation at Rivoni School for the Blind cannot be allowed to continue. Learners and employees deserve a safe, properly staffed, and dignified environment. The PSA emphasises that this matter is not a mere dispute regarding overtime or remuneration. It concerns the Limpopo Department of Education's responsibility to provide employees with reasonable and safe working conditions and to ensure that vulnerable learners receive proper care in a safe environment. It is unacceptable that a school responsible for approximately 150 blind learners should depend on a handful of exhausted employees to maintain essential services. The PSA urges the Limpopo Department of Education to act immediately to address the deteriorating situation at the School.

END

