

MEDIA RELEASE PSA appalled by the level of unpreparedness of Free State Department of Education regarding the opening of schools.

DATE 26 May 2020

EMBARGO None

ENQUIRIES communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) in the Free State is convinced that there is enough evidence that shows that the Department of Education, in the province, is not ready to reopen the schools. The PSA received feedback from its structure yesterday 25 May 2020, which indicated that most of the school Principals did report to the schools as they were called to meetings with the district directors. As a result, no assessment of readiness could be conducted at the school and no Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and or sanitisers were delivered.

The provincial office managed to establish that Qwa-Qwa schools have not been deep cleaned and some schools do not have water. There are also about six hostels and five of them don't have water, namely, Sekgutlong, Mampoi, Manthatisi, Tseki and Thiboloha. It was also established that not a single school in Qwa-Qwa has received masks for teachers, staff, and learners. The PSA has received confirmation from members and shop stewards that government schools around all the districts have not yet been disinfected or deep cleaned. In fact, the department is still in the process of appointing companies to do this. This process may take longer than a week. The PSA is currently flooded with information from members that most of the OHS regulations are not in place. The PSA further understands that most schools did not yet receive sanitiser and PPE's. School hostels all over the Free State are not disinfected yet and staff at some hostels were told to do their own deep cleaning.

The HOD was warned by labour of Friday 22 May 2020, regarding the state of unreadiness to open schools. This was based on what is required to be in place before expecting employees to return to work. It is the PSA's position that the department in collaboration with all labour unions, conduct a survey of all the schools to assess the level of compliance as outlined in the relevant legislations and directives. It clear that despite the commitments made by the HOD, expecting staff to go back to work is extremely risky and irresponsible.

END