

MEDIA RELEASE PSA appalled by working conditions at Department of Health

DATE 2 August 2018

EMBARGO None

ENQUIRIES communicatio@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) representing more than 240 000 Public Service employees, is considering opening a case of non-compliance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* against the Department of Health.

The PSA has continuously raised concerns over working conditions at various government buildings that did not comply with the *Act*.

The Minister of Health addressed employees at the Department of Health's Civitas Building in Pretoria earlier this year on related issues and mandated the Director-General to meet with labour to find solutions after Civitas Building was found to be a health risk by NOSA, an organisation dealing with occupational-risk management. In a communique to employees at Civitas Building from the Director-General, Ms MP Matsoso, dated 20 April 2018 amongst others, it was stipulated that all emergency repairs and maintenance should be addressed immediately in order priority; employees would work until 13:00 while emergency repairs and maintenance were taking place; and detailed plans of full repairs and maintenance would be shared with staff once finalised.

"It is disturbing, to say the least, that the Department has not complied with these commitments and, three months later, employees are still reporting illnesses related to unconducive working conditions," said PSA General Manager, Ivan Fredericks.

"Employees complained, and labour raised concerns with the Department. Both the Minister and Director-General acknowledged the problem, especially after it was confirmed by NOSA. It is not clear why we still have the same issues three months after solutions were outlined to remedy the situation. Pressing charges seems to be the final resort as, ironically, the Department that is tasked with rendering health services to the country, is dismally failing its own employees," said Mr Fredericks.

Yesterday it was reported in the media that nurses residing at the Addington Hospital nurses' home were protesting because of the state of facilities in that hospital, including non-functioning lifts and interrupted water supply. Employees have brought the issues to the attention of the Department of Health, without rendering results.

"This is the same hospital that was condemned by the Department of Labour during 2015/16, with patients having to be moved. Since then, the situation has not improved and renovations moving at a snail's pace. The Department's claims that a lack of funding is to blame, bears little weight when considering the ultimate cost of lives being endangered by this ongoing situation," said Mr Fredericks.

END

