

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA calls for closure of Limpopo Department of Education's Hlanganani North Circuit Office Building owing to health and safety concerns**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) calls for the immediate closure of the Limpopo Department of Education's Hlanganani North Circuit Office building in Vhembe West owing to risks to employees' health and safety.

The PSA visited the building in Vhembe West on 28 June 2023 after receiving complaints from the Union's members who are working in unconducive conditions owing to the employer's failure to provide a safe working environment. The PSA was shocked to find that the office does not have clean, drinkable water. Water is obtained from a borehole and is dirty and not drinkable. There is no water supply from the municipality pipe and employees must bring their own drinking water to work. Toilets are dysfunctional and cannot flush owing to a lack of a water pressure, forcing employees to use buckets when visiting toilets. The building is dilapidated and neglected with cracked walls, broken floor tiles, broken windowpanes, broken doors with no handles or keys, which endangers employees and their belongings. There are live exposed electric wires, and some lights are not working. Employees are furthermore using old, uncomfortable furniture and doors have been damaged by termites. In addition to loadshedding, the electricity supply is constantly cut off by Eskom owing to non-payment because of ineffective financial management.

The employer is clearly not complying with section 8 of *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, which places the legal burden on the employer to provide a workplace that is safe and without health risks to employees. The PSA has been engaging with the Department of Education to address the issues of worker safety without success. The Department has demonstrated an uncaring attitude when it comes to ensuring that workers are working in a safe workplace. The matter has been escalated to the Department of Employment and Labour and a date is awaited for an inspection. The PSA, however, calls on Education MEC to close the building and provide alternative accommodation for employees until the issues have been resolved.

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