

MEDIA RELEASE PSA calls for immediate appointment of Health MEC in Northern Cape

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EMBARGO None

ENQUIRIES communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) urges the Premier of the Northern Cape to take decisive action and appoint a full-time Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Health.

The Province's health system is under unprecedented strain, and continued interim leadership threatens the delivery of essential services to the residents of the Northern Cape. Since November 2025, MEC Mase Manopole has served as acting MEC for Health whilst simultaneously retaining the portfolio of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform. This dual mandate, though well-intentioned, has fragmented focus and undermined effective governance in both critical sectors. The Health Ombud report revealed a 38 % increase in complaints related to delayed emergency care, whilst the Auditor-General's 2023/24 audit highlighted financial irregularities amounting to R 215 million and a 27% vacancy rate for medical officers, the highest in the country.

Prolonged acting tenures exacerbate the problem. The health portfolio has operated under acting leadership for at least three consecutive years, eroding institutional memory and impeding long-term strategic planning. During this period, the Province's maternal mortality ratio rose from 152 deaths per 100 000 live births in 2022 to 168 in 2024, whilst the under-five mortality rate remains at 58 per 1 000 live births, well above the national average of 42.

These figures underscore the urgent need for stable, focused executive oversight. The current arrangement forces a single MEC to split time and resources between two expansive portfolios. This dilutes oversight, hampers accountability, and compromises the ability to implement meaningful reform.

The PSA asserts that both the Health Sector and the Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform Sector deserve dedicated executive stewardship. To restore confidence and stability, the PSA proposes the immediate appointment of a permanent MEC for Health, with full authority to stabilise the Department, address audit findings, and improve service-delivery outcomes. A separate MEC must be responsible for Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform to ensure focused leadership and uninterrupted progress in this vital sector.

The Northern Cape has a talent of capable leaders ready to assume these responsibilities. The PSA is ready to collaborate with the Premier's Office to facilitate a swift and transparent appointment process. The health of the Province cannot be a part-time commitment. It requires a leader who devote all energy to repairing systemic failures that have left hospitals understaffed and communities underserved.

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