

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA calls for more consultation by Department of Correctional Services to assist in overcoming challenges
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EMBARGO	None
ENQUIRIES	communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) welcomes the Minister of Correctional Services' recognition of the significant challenges facing the Department of Correctional Services, as reflected in the budget tabled on 13 May 2026.

Prevailing challenges include sustained budget reductions, severe overcrowding in correctional facilities, rising inmate populations, and the ongoing loss of experienced officials. These are issues that the PSA has consistently raised. It is encouraging that these matters are now receiving the necessary attention at policy level. The Minister's assurance that the Department is making progress in restoring stability and hope in correctional services is noted. The PSA also noted the Minister's stance on the ban of cell phones during working hours. Matter of such nature must, however, be consulted with unions to ensure that reasonable and meaningful policies are developed to enable employees to cooperate with directives.

The PSA is further particularly concerned about the continued strain placed on correctional officials and correctional facilities. With overcrowding currently at 58% and an inmate population of 169 519 on 5 May 2026, the Department faces an unsustainable situation that threatens effective rehabilitation and the safety of officials. The PSA strongly supports the Department's growing emphasis on self-sufficiency initiatives. The expansion of internal production through bakeries, agricultural projects, workshops, and textile manufacturing represents a progressive approach to reducing expenditure whilst promoting offender rehabilitation.

The PSA notes remarkable achievements, such as the operation of twelve bakeries, which resulted in cost savings of R77.1 million in the 2025/26-financial year, and the production of agricultural commodities valued at approximately R125 million. These initiatives contribute to cost containment and equip offenders with practical skills, improving their prospects for reintegration into society. The PSA encourages the Department to expand these programmes whilst ensuring proper oversight and adequate resourcing.

The intention to prioritise the filling of critical posts is a step in the right direction. Addressing vacancies is essential to improving institutional safety, reducing workload pressures on employees, and enhancing service delivery. The PSA, however, maintains that more decisive action is required to retain experienced officials, improve working conditions, and ensure staffing levels align with the realities of overcrowded facilities.

Despite the positive elements of the budget, the PSA is extremely concerned about the Minister's announcement of the introduction of new insignia in the Department. This matter is currently under discussion at the bargaining chamber. No agreement has been reached yet, and the announcement thus undermines the spirit of collective bargaining.

END

