

MEDIA RELEASE PSA calls for urgent intervention following pit-toilet incident at Mogogelo Primary School, North West

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is appalled by a recent incident at Mogogelo Primary School in North West, where a Grade-1 learner fell into an open pit-toilet inlet.

This near-fatal event is a harrowing reminder of the systemic failure to provide basic, safe sanitation in the provincial education system. The PSA demands immediate and decisive intervention by the Premier of North West, the MEC for Basic Education, and the Department of Employment and Labour to address this life-threatening infrastructure crisis. The continued existence of pit latrines is a direct contravention of the South African Human Rights Commission Report on Water and Sanitation, which explicitly identifies such structures as a violation of the right to dignity, safety, and a clean environment. The Report underscores that the state has a constitutional obligation to provide adequate sanitation, yet schools remain death traps for the most vulnerable members of society.

The incident at Mogogelo Primary School highlights a catastrophic breakdown in oversight. Whilst the PSA notes the disciplinary action taken against the school principal, the blame cannot rest solely at school level. The MEC must explain why contractors are permitted to abandon sites without securing hazardous areas. The "VIP flushing toilet" conversion project is meaningless if it leaves behind open, unbarricaded death traps. As the executive head of the Province, the Premier must prioritise the eradication of these facilities. Progress has been unacceptably slow, and the "infrastructure backlog" is no longer a valid excuse for putting children's lives at risk.

The PSA calls upon the Labour Inspectorate to urgently conduct health and safety audits at all schools undergoing sanitation renovations. Failure to barricade construction sites is a gross violation of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, and those responsible for oversight must be held criminally liable.

The PSA will not stand by whilst the safety of pupils, educators and other staff is compromised. The PSA demands an immediate, transparent audit of all schools in North West still utilising or transitioning from pit toilets. Blacklisting and legal action against contractors who abandon sites or fail to adhere to safety protocols is required. The Premier must ensure that emergency funds are redirected to complete all sanitation projects in the current quarter. Expressing sympathy without structural change is hollow. It is time for the North West Provincial Government to treat school sanitation as the emergency it is.

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