

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA calls for urgent intervention to stop excessive, unwarranted legal expenses in Public Service
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The Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA) condemns the unacceptable practice by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development to appointing attorneys to preside over disciplinary cases and prosecute employees.

This inappropriate behaviour persists despite clear directives from government, emphasizing diligence in public expenditure. The PSA previously obtained a favourable arbitration award against this practice. This award is currently undergoing a review process instituted by the Department. While the review is *sub judice*, the Department is using external legal representatives for another hearing. It intentionally incurs wasteful expenditure by carrying the travel and accommodation costs of three advocates, a state attorney representative, and an employer representative from Gauteng. The PSA estimates these costs to be excessive and will eventually be borne by taxpayers.

This raises concerns about the fairness of the procedure, transparency, and the responsible use of public funds. It gives the impression that a new “gravy train” is being created by unprocedural use of external legal representatives in a matter dating back to 2015. The PSA regards such expenditure as extremely irresponsible when government resources are strained, and posts are not being filled. It is questionable why five delegates would be flown from Gauteng to the Eastern Cape and occupy expensive accommodation whilst representatives in the employ of the public service are available in the Eastern Cape.

The Public Service Disciplinary Code and Procedure is intended to guide disciplinary proceedings and ensure a fair and equitable process for all parties. It is disconcerting that the Department's actions disregard these established guidelines. The PSA is concerned that the continued unilateral appointment of external legal representatives disregards the spirit of fairness and the responsible use of public funds. The allocation of public resources towards repeated external/private legal representatives is deplorable and raises questions about the Department's priorities and commitment to fiscal prudence.

The PSA calls on the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development for immediate intervention to stop these practices in the Department to ensure a return to ethical conduct, fiscal responsibility, and transparency to regain public trust in government institutions.

END