

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Covid-19: PSA concerned about temporary resettlement of homeless people in overburdened Mitchell's Plain**

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**EMBARGO** None

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The PSA, as a Union representing more than 24 500 members in the Western Cape, many of whom are rendering essential services in a variety of key Government Departments, is deeply concerned about the reported placement of homeless people at the Strandfontein Sports Field in Mitchell's Plain, during the COVID-19 lockdown period.

The PSA, which represents thousands of employees at Health institutions, the SA Police Service, SASSA and the Department of Home Affairs, is concerned that Mitchell's Plain is already facing a huge challenge whenever there is service delivery protest action and residents of the informal settlement, literally close the area. The PSA supports the need for homeless people need to be accommodated and properly cared for at a site where their exposure to COVID-19 can be mitigated. The concern is, however, that Strandfontein Road is the only alternative route that Mitchell's Plain residents can use should Jakes Gerwel Drive be blocked. Under current circumstances, the risk of protest action is high. Should this become a reality, there is a risk that it will bring Mitchell's Plain to standstill and will prevent service delivery. In addition, a large portion of public sector workers come from the Mitchell's Plain area and a blocking of the area will result in many essential workers not being able to reach their work, will be catastrophic.

In addition, the Strandfontein Sports Field is far away from Health facilities, which presents transportation challenges. Any patients from temporary shelter will have to be serviced by the New Mitchell's Plain District Hospital, which is already been overburdened following the closing down Jooste Hospital in Mannenberg. Mitchell's Plain Clinic cannot cope with the service delivery demands of its own catchment area. The new Khayelitsha Hospital is bursting at the seams and are referring patients to Helderberg Hospital near Somerset West.

The PSA therefore believes that alternative suitable sites that are close to existing Health facilities should be considered. These alternative sites could be used to house smaller groups and do not require any further substantial cost or infrastructure to be put in place to accommodate the 4 000 homeless people. The Tygerberg Velodrome is close to the Tygerberg Hospital and Treatment Centre, Hartleyvale Stadium in Observatory could be served by Groote Schuur Hospital, and the Cape Town Stadium or the abandoned Nurses Home at Somerset Hospital could be serviced by Somerset Hospital.

The PSA calls on the City of Cape Town to consider the Union's proposal to ensure that homeless people are catered for during this critical time without overburdening Mitchell's Plain, which could prevent further complications during the COVID-19 lockdown period.

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