

**MEDIA RELEASE**                                 **PSA concerned at stigmatization of frontline public servant working to battle COVID-19**

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The Public Service Association of South Africa (PSA), representing almost 240 000 members working for the public service and various other state-owned entities, is appalled that frontline workers are being ill-treated and discriminated against by various business outlets, for merely being vulnerable to being exposed to the COVID-19 virus in the line of duty.

Frontline workers are exposed to the virus daily when they come into contact with the public and through their service in an effort to save the lives of countless of people. It is unimaginable that the very same people who are in desperate need of frontline workers for assistance stand behind the inhumane treatment to these everyday heroes. The PSA is aware of some banks and other businesses, that categorically state that Correctional Officers and other frontline workers must not enter their premises for services, asking many to rather wait in their cars for service. This conduct is heart-breaking and condemned in the strongest possible terms, as it perpetuates the stigmatisation of the coronavirus and may lead to frontline workers also being rejected by their own communities.

The public service provides services that during this time are still essential and to the benefits of everyone in the country from the frontline workers daily noble sacrifice.

The stigmatization of these frontline professionals can have a negative impact on the services that are so desperately needed by the public during the pandemic. The PSA is concerned, that if this treatment by the public continues, it will result in a revolt of frontline workers who are risking their own lives selflessly. These frontline workers are not spared from being infected and although it is true that the infection rate amongst frontline workers is quite high, South Africa will not be able to fight this pandemic without their sacrifice and commitment.

The PSA calls on all shop owners, businesses and all citizens to recognise these brave heroes for their daily commitment to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring that we all can return to our normal lives. The PSA also call upon all business outlet to honour all frontline workers and designate preferential service to all frontline workers so that they are served immediately and before other civilians to allow them to manage their crucial time to serve with vitality during this difficult period.

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