

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA condemns appalling conditions at Department of Arts Culture and Sport Development in North West**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is committed to ensuring safe and conducive work environments for public servants and was shocked by non-adherence to occupational health and safety standards by the Department of Arts Culture and Sports Development in Potchefstroom.

The PSA discovered that employees are working in non-ventilated offices. Ceilings are falling and offices have water leakages. Exit doors to be used in emergencies are locked and the keys are nowhere to be found. The water leak has caused a bad odour, which poses a health risk to employees. Office chairs are in such poor conditions that employees covered the chairs with plastic to prevent their clothes from tearing. The building is next to a butchery, resulting in the first floor being very cold owing to freezer temperatures. This has impacted on the state of health of some employees. Waste is seen everywhere in the building and stacks of boxes are packed in the passageway, posing a further health and safety risk to employees.

In addition, the Department has a farm some 16 km from the town that is also not conducive for employees to work at. The grass is long and attracts dangerous snakes. On the day of PSA's inspection, a 1.2-meter venomous snake attempted to enter and employee's room. There is no water and electricity on the farm, exposing employees to dreadful and unsafe conditions.

The PSA forwarded an urgent communique to both the Head of the Department and the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) with supporting evidence of the horrendous conditions. The PSA received a prompt response from the DEL in that an inspector was immediately appointed to investigate.

The wellbeing of employees is a priority, and the PSA will continue striving to ensure that employers provide a safe and conducive workplace.

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