

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA condemns looting at Limpopo Department of Health and calls for decisive action by Premier**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is disturbed by allegations of corruption by the Limpopo Department of Health in the procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE).

It is alleged that the Department handpicked 216 companies, which shared R923 million worth of PPE contracts with most of the beneficiaries being politically connected individuals, ANC activists, relatives or friends of senior officials, and prominent politicians. In addition, most of these companies were not on the Department's database, hinting at abuse of power, favouritism, fraud, nepotism, and corruption. One of the service providers from KwaZulu-Natal obtained aR185 million contract to supply PPE whilst not appearing on the official database of suppliers. The fact that most of the service providers are from Vhembe, the home of the MEC, Chief Financial Officer, and Chief of Staff also gives rise to suspicion. The allegation that the Supply and Demand Manager manipulated procurement processes to benefit associates and comrades whilst locking evidence the CFO's office, who is also implicated, warrants thorough investigation.

The PSA advises the Limpopo Government should take a cue from the Gauteng Government that is faced with a similar situation and acted decisively to ensure that investigations were conducted and suspended implicated officials in the interest of uncompromised investigations. The PSA is also concerned about the deafening silence on this matter by the Limpopo Treasury that is tasked with good governance and sound public resource management in provincial and local government to ensure sustainable service delivery.

The PSA calls for all implicated officials to be placed on precautionary suspension whilst an investigation is conducted by the Special Investigation Unit. Officials will not be able to investigate their principals and will make mockery of the endeavour to eradicate corruption.

The Limpopo Health MEC should be placed on special leave. The levels of dishonesty in Limpopo should move the Premier to institute lifestyle audits on public officials. The Premier should consider a forensic audit for the Department of Health to root out corruption. This looting can only be eradicated by dismissing corrupt officials, jailing those found guilty and seizing assets. This will set a clear example that there is no room for corruption and maladministration. The PSA will also approach the Treasury, the Public Protector, and the Office of the Premier to ensure that this matter is prioritised.

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