

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA condemns North West Department of Education's awarding of R100 million printing contract
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is concerned about the North West Department of Education's decision to award a R100 million contract for the printing of matric examination papers.

This cost represents an almost fourfold increase from the R27 million previously paid for the same service, without any clear justification. This excessive expenditure occurs at a time when the North West Education Sector is in crisis. Thousands of learners, particularly in rural areas, still lack reliable transportation to school. Many are forced to walk long distances in unsafe conditions, arriving late or exhausted, or missing school entirely.

Instead of prioritising these critical access issues, the Department has chosen to spend millions on a contract that could have been done more economically. In addition, the state of school infrastructure in the province is dire. Numerous schools are operating in dilapidated, unsafe buildings, with broken windows, leaking roofs, and overcrowded classrooms. Basic sanitation is still lacking in many schools, and learners continue to be taught in environments that are not conducive to quality teaching and learning. It is deeply disappointing that the Department would overlook these urgent needs in favour of what appears to be a questionable procurement decision.

The PSA is further troubled by the Department's failure to use the services of the Government Printing Works (GPW), a capable and secure state-owned entity designed specifically to provide printing services to government departments. Choosing a private contractor at a significantly higher cost undermines public confidence in the Department's commitment to good governance and raises red flags regarding possible procurement irregularities. The PSA calls for a full forensic investigation into the awarding of this contract. The investigation must examine why the GPW was excluded, what processes were followed, and whether any laws or financial regulations were violated. The contract should be suspended pending the outcome of such an investigation.

The PSA further urges the North West Department of Education to account publicly for this decision and to reallocate resources to learner transport, school repairs, and infrastructure development. It is unacceptable that learners are being left behind whilst large sums of money are being spent without clear benefit or transparency. The PSA is committed to promoting ethical governance and protecting the rights of public servants and learners. Education funding must be used to address real needs, not wasted through questionable contracts and poor decision-making.

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