

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA condemns unilateral 9.5% increase in GEMS 2024 medical-aid fees
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EMBARGO	None
ENQUIRIES	communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) condemns the unilateral decision by the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS), to increase its medical-aid fees for 2024 by 9.5%.

GEMS was approved by Cabinet in 2002 and registered on 1 January 2005 to provide healthcare needs for qualifying public servants. Its mandate was to create affordable and accessible medical services and products for public servants. GEMS currently serves more than 760 000 main members and two million beneficiaries.

This sharp increase will worsen public servants' financial conditions, with most of them not being able to afford the exorbitant medical fees charged by GEMS. The fee increase is above the salary increase received by public servants in 2023. The PSA vehemently objected to the decision and raised frustration with the unreasonable increase at the Joint Working Committee meeting of the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC). The PSA urged GEMS to request its board to reconsider this increase. The PSA further advised GEMS to consider using reserve savings obtained during the COVID-19 pandemic period to provide relief for vulnerable members.

The PSA will call an urgent meeting of the PSCBC to further engage on this matter. The PSA believes that PSCBC Resolution 1/2006, which established GEMS, must be reviewed. Proposed amendments to the said collective agreement will be tabled to allow unions more powers to influence decisions on future fee increases. The PSA will further advance a proposal to increase the number of medical schemes under the collective agreement. There should be competition amongst various medical schemes to provide affordable and accessible medical-aid products for public servants. The medical-aid scheme for public servants should not be monopolised going forward.

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