

MEDIA RELEASE PSA condemns working conditions at Alice Magistrate's Court, Eastern Cape

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), representing members in the judiciary sector, has raised serious concerns about the unsafe and unacceptable working conditions under which employees of the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development are currently operating at the Alice Magistrate's Court in the Eastern Cape.

During a recent visit to the area, the PSA observed that conditions at the old Court building have still not been properly addressed after it was destroyed by fire in 2022. According to members working at the Court, the building, which was one of the historic structures in the area, had already been experiencing significant occupational health and safety challenges before the incident. These included electrical faults and water leaks that were not adequately attended to by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure. Following the fire, court operations are being conducted in temporary mobile structures.

The PSA noted with concern that these structures are not suitable for the handling of serious court matters. Air-conditioning units are not fully functional, creating difficult conditions for employees and members of the public. Even more concerning is the lack of proper security infrastructure. The temporary structures do not have secure holding cells to accommodate suspects or offenders awaiting trial. This situation poses a serious safety risk to employees, Magistrates, Prosecutors, SA Police Service members, and members of the public attending court proceedings. There is also no adequately secured space to ensure the safety and proper functioning of court officials.

The current situation undermines the safety of employees and the dignity of the justice system. The PSA calls on the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, together with the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, to urgently provide clarity on plans and timelines for the renovation of the old Court building or the construction of a new and suitable court facility in Alice. The safety of public servants and the community they serve cannot be compromised. Immediate intervention is required to ensure that justice can be administered in a safe, secure, and dignified environment.

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