

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA demands accountability and urgent Ministerial action after bus-fire incident
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is outraged and concerned following a bus fire involving Department of Correctional Services (DCS) learners on the N1 near Laingsburg in the Western Cape on 2 August 2026.

Whilst the PSA is grateful that no lives were lost and that all learners and the driver were safely evacuated, this incident cannot be dismissed as an unfortunate occurrence. It is a glaring indictment of poor management, apparent neglect of employee and learner safety, and a continued failure by the DCS to address longstanding concerns regarding the condition of vehicles used for learner transport. The PSA has repeatedly raised concerns about the roadworthiness of DCS buses and the unacceptable conditions under which learners are transported. Despite these concerns, management has failed to take decisive action, demonstrating an alarming lack of urgency and disregard for the wellbeing of those entrusted to its care.

The PSA finds it unacceptable that learners are expected to undertake journeys of up to 15 hours on buses designed for short distances, whilst the same buses are routinely used for daily scholar-transport services. This practice places excessive strain on ageing vehicles and significantly increases the risk of mechanical failure and serious accidents.

The recent incident should serve as a wake-up call. The DCS cannot wait until lives are lost before acting. Had circumstances been slightly different, South Africa could now be mourning the deaths of learners and employees. The indifference by those responsible for ensuring safe transportation is extremely concerning. Employees, learners, and their families deserve assurance that every reasonable measure is being taken to safeguard lives. Instead, they are left wondering whether cost-cutting and poor planning have been allowed to take precedence over safety.

The PSA calls on the Minister of Correctional Services to urgently intervene and institute an independent investigation into the circumstances that led to the Laingsburg bus fire. The roadworthiness and maintenance status of all DCS buses used for learner and scholar transport must be investigated as well as compliance with occupational health and safety obligations. There should be accountability by officials responsible for fleet management and transport operations. Steps are required to prevent similar incidents.



The PSA further demands the immediate withdrawal of any bus that cannot be certified as roadworthy and the urgent procurement of suitable long-distance transport services for DCS learners. The Minister must not allow this matter to be buried under bureaucracy and internal processes. Decisive leadership is required to restore confidence and ensure that the safety of learners and employees is prioritised.

The PSA will continue to monitor the matter closely and will not hesitate to pursue all available avenues to protect the interests, safety, and dignity of employees and learners should the DCS fail to take decisive action.

END

