

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA demands answers on Correctional Services disclaimer audit
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The Public Servants Association (PSA), is calling for urgent parliamentary scrutiny after the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) received a disclaimer audit opinion for the 2025/26 financial year. Parliament must establish accountability for the reported breakdown in governance and financial controls, require a time-bound remedial plan and ensure that public funds are protected. A disclaimer is among the most serious audit outcomes, indicating that the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) could not obtain sufficient appropriate evidence on which to base an audit opinion.

Reports that DCS sought reconsideration of the outcome, but that the AGSA maintained its position, mean that the focus must now shift to accountability, corrective action and protection of public funds. The DCS is expected to table its 2025/26 Annual Report in Parliament on 30 September 2026. Media reports indicate that the Department's five-year food-supply contracting process involved 115 service providers and 66 nutritional products, with annual costs exceeding R1,06 billion. They further report that 17 long-term contracts were flagged for non-compliance, including concerns about altered evaluation criteria and inadequate price benchmarking. These allegations require an urgent, transparent and evidence-based investigation.

The situation is particularly concerning given that DCS received an unqualified audit opinion in 2024/25, despite the AGSA having raised material supply-chain management concerns. A department entrusted with public safety and rehabilitation cannot treat repeated audit warnings as administrative technicalities. They are red flags requiring decisive intervention. The PSA has previously raised concerns about the food-supply tender and its procurement risks. While the available information does not establish that the food contract caused the disclaimer, the reported deficiencies warrant a full examination of the tender, evaluation process, contract management, pricing, payments and oversight responsibilities.

The custodianship of public funds is a constitutional and legal obligation. Financial and procurement failures are not merely accounting concerns. They directly affect employees, inmates, rehabilitation programmes, service delivery and public confidence. The PSA therefore calls on Parliament, particularly the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, to ensure that DCS discloses all audit matters that contributed to the disclaimer and accounts for material procurement failures. The PSA further calls for establishing responsibility where wrongdoing is proven, the



implementation of a public, time-bound remedial plan, the recovery of losses were legally warranted, and the provision of regular progress reports on disciplinary, civil, and criminal referrals. There can be no shielding of implicated individuals, selective accountability or further delay. Consequence management must be swift, lawful, evidence-based and applied without fear, favour or regard for rank.

The PSA has always highlighted critical staff shortages at correctional centres and unsafe working environment and financial constraints was always cited as a barrier to correct this situation. The PSA awaits the tabling of the Annual Report and Parliament's response and will continue to demand credible, time-bound corrective action that protects employees, restores institutional integrity and safeguards the public interest.

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