

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA demands forensic investigation and Northern Cape Premier's direct intervention in R173 million abandoned school project
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) condemns the abandonment of a R173 million boarding-school project, initiated seven years ago by the Northern Cape Department of Education and funded through the Independent Development Trust (IDT).

This abandonment is a direct infringement of section 29(1)(a) of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*, which guarantees every learner the right to basic education. It also violates section 217(1) of the *Constitution*, which requires public procurement to be fair, equitable, transparent, competitive, and cost-effective.

The Premier of the Northern Cape, as the head of the provincial executive, is bound by section 125(2)(e) of the *Constitution* to coordinate the functions of the provincial administration and ensure that departments deliver on their mandates. This responsibility includes ensuring the completion of critical infrastructure projects, preventing the misuse of public funds, and intervening when there is evidence of maladministration. Section 38(1)(d) of the *Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999 (PFMA)* further obligates the accounting officer of a department to take effective steps to prevent irregular, fruitless, and wasteful expenditure. Section 63(2)(a) of the *PFMA* places a duty on the executive authority (the Premier and the MEC) to ensure that the Department has and maintains effective, efficient, and transparent systems of financial and risk management. Treasury Regulation 9.1.1 further requires the accounting officer to report, in writing, to the relevant treasury and the Auditor-General any irregular expenditure, fruitless and wasteful expenditure, or criminal conduct in the Department.

The failure to complete this project without transparent reporting and corrective action is therefore a governance failure and a potential breach of the *PFMA* and Treasury Regulations. The *Executive Members' Ethics Act 82 of 1998*, and the *Executive Ethics Code* require members of the Executive Council to act in good faith and the best interests of good governance, avoiding any conduct that undermines the integrity of their office. Allowing this project to remain abandoned without decisive intervention risks violating these ethical obligations and eroding public trust in provincial leadership.

The PSA therefore demands the immediate appointment of the Special Investigating Unit in terms of the *Special Investigating Units and Special Tribunals Act 74 of 1996* to conduct a forensic investigation into procurement, contracting, payments, and possible fraud linked to this project. The publication, within 30 days, of all project-related records, including tender documents, progress reports, invoices, and financial statements is required. Provincial Treasury must intervene to ring-fence any remaining funds and develop an accelerated completion plan. The PSA further demands disciplinary and criminal action against all persons, whether in the public or private sector, who contributed to delays, cost inflation, or mismanagement.

The PSA notes with concern the pattern of stalled public infrastructure projects in the Northern Cape, many linked to allegations of corruption or procurement irregularities. In this context, the R173 million school project is not an isolated incident but a symptom of systemic governance decay. The Premier's constitutional oath in Schedule 2 of the *Constitution* is a binding commitment to uphold the rights of the people and act decisively where governance failures threaten service delivery.

Should the Premier fail to act within 14 days, the PSA will escalate the matter to the National Treasury, the Public Protector, and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The PSA will also mobilise public servants, parents, and communities across the province for demonstrations demanding accountability, transparency, and immediate delivery of this long-overdue school. The people of the Northern Cape deserve infrastructure that works, money that is spent as intended, and leaders who act in the public interest. The PSA will use every available legal, political, and public platform to ensure that this project is completed and that those responsible for its failure face consequences.

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