

MEDIA RELEASE PSA has reservations about consolidation of medical schemes for public servants

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) has serious reservations about a discussion document released by the Council for Medical Schemes calling for public comment on the consolidation of medical-aid schemes for public servants.

The Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council had to sign an agreement to establish an Advisory Committee to advise the Minister and the Board of Directors of the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS) to address service delivery issues in GEMS. “Public servants are already faced with challenges with GEMS to ensure basic payments of service providers and obtaining prior authorisation for hospital admission. If the intention is to amalgamate these schemes into one, it can only further exacerbate the challenges faced with the administration of the Scheme. To include an already-troubled scheme, such as Transmed, will result in a further reduction of benefits and a burden on public servants to cough up more on excess co-payments. The matter is not as plain as ensuring bigger buying power, but also to ensure that medical-aid benefits are accessible and affordable, especially to public servants belonging to GEMS and the long-term sustainability of the Fund. Medical subsidies for public servants and other employees mentioned in the article, form part of these employees’ compensation packages. Statements such as ‘The state contributes significantly to public servants’ medical-aid contributions’ are therefore cautioned against. Any intended transfer of employees and/or pensioners should only be done with their agreement after following due collective bargaining processes,” said PSA General Manager, Ivan Fredericks.

The PSA supports the move towards the principles of implementing a National Health Insurance (NHI), which is subjected to challenges that relate to poor public-health infrastructure, lack of human-resources capacity such as doctors, capacity dealing with fraud, abuse and corruption.

“The PSA, however, does not believe that GEMS has the capacity to carry out an experiment of rolling out the NHI as this may destroy the gains already made to improve on service delivery challenges,” said Mr Fredericks.

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