MEDIA RELEASE   PSA slams GEMS for defending indefensible contribution hikes, forcing public servants to choose between healthcare or hunger

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), representing more than 245 000 public servants and pensioners, vehemently slams the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS) for defending the Scheme's outrageous 9.8% contribution increase for 2026.

This decision is a direct assault on the financial well-being of public servants who are already buckling under the weight of escalating living costs. GEMS claims that these hikes are necessary for "sustainability". The PSA rejects this excuse as misleading and unacceptable. Whilst private schemes such as *Discovery* and *Bonitas* announced increases averaging 6%, GEMS has chosen to impose nearly double the burden on government employees, the very people the Scheme was created to protect. Instead of tackling fraud, mismanagement, and inflated administration costs, GEMS has opted to punish its members. This is not sustainability - it is exploitation.

Public servants are now forced to choose between healthcare and basic survival, an unacceptable situation that undermines the founding principles of Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) Resolution 1/2006. The PSA will not stand idle whilst GEMS defends the indefensible. Should this continue, the PSA will be left no choice but to intensify actions against GEMS, including mass protests, to demand accountability. The PSA has already submitted agenda items at the PSCBC for the amendment of Resolution 1/2006 to defend public servants and pensioners against the onslaught by GEMS.

It is concerning that amidst a pending meeting with GEMS, it still has the audacity to defend such an exorbitant increase. Public servants and retired public servants deserve affordable healthcare, not corporate greed disguised as sustainability. The PSA demands that GEMS scraps the 2026 hikes and engages in genuine consultation to find fair solutions.

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