

**MEDIA RELEASE**

PSA urges KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health to prioritise patient and staff safety at Pietermaritzburg Grey's Hospital

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**EMBARGO**

None

**ENQUIRIES**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is concerned about faulty air-conditioners at Grey's Hospital in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal.

As KwaZulu-Natal battles another intense heat wave, Grey's Hospital is facing severe air-conditioning failures that are putting patients and staff at risk. Extreme temperatures, often reaching 36° C, present challenges for vulnerable groups such as elderly patients, newborn babies, critically ill, and those recovering from surgery. This situation is compounded by the Hospital's inability to maintain a safe working environment, raising ethical and legal questions about the right to healthcare and the duty of the Department to ensure a safe working environment, as stipulated in legislation and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

Major surgeries have been halted as doctors stated that temperatures at operating theatres and intensive care units are too high for safe procedures, forcing them to postpone critical operations. Without proper cooling, the Hospital's ability to meet basic standards of patient care is compromised. Healthcare workers are already working under severe pressure owing to short staffing, a lack of resources, and hospital overcrowding. The faulty air conditioners are adding to the crisis. There is an increased risk of dehydration and medical complications to patients, worsened recovery conditions, increased bacterial growth owing to high humidity thus jeopardising sterility. Employees are exposed to excessive heat, resulting in fatigue and burnout.

The PSA urges the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health to prioritise safety, as faulty air conditioners pose a risk to patients and staff. The PSA demands immediate corrective action, including urgent repair or full replacement of all defective air conditioners in the Hospital, temporary cooling solutions such as industrial coolers and fans, a written action plan with timelines, communication to staff regarding progress, and assurance of compliance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. The PSA will not tolerate working conditions that endanger the Union's members or compromise the safety of public servants and the communities they serve.

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