

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA vindicated by Minister of Public Service and Administration's observation that public servants are overworked and underpaid
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) has consistently challenged the misinformed, narrow, and subjective analysis by some economists pushing the narrative that South African public servants are overpaid.

The Minister of Public Service and Administration has correctly observed that public servants are underpaid, overworked, and demoralised, a stance constantly articulated by the PSA. Damaging narratives exposed public servants to unnecessary attacks by the members of the public, labelling them lazy without recognising the difficulties public servants are experiencing. Public servants are committed to ensuring that quality and professional services are rendered, however the odds are against them. The reality is that all public service departments and entities are understaffed and under resourced. Even the most committed and passionate employees are bound to suffer burnout owing to an unmanageable workload.

The PSA is not oblivious to South Africa's economic challenges and has constantly warned against wastage through the tender system, which has been proven to be fertile ground for corruption. Whilst the Minister of Finance's budget speech acknowledged the strain on government finances, it failed to address the core issue of public servants remaining underpaid and overworked, despite being at the core of service delivery. The PSA is deeply disappointed that the wage bill remains a political football, with public servants portrayed as a burden rather than the essential workforce that keeps the country running.

The recent 5.5% wage increase for public servants, though above inflation, does not adequately compensate for years of stagnant wages, rising living costs, and increasing workloads. Government as the employer must consider meaningful improvements in working conditions, career development, and respect for the profession, which cannot be achieved by the implementation of austerity measures. A recent study by the Tshwane University of Technology and the PSETA revealed alarming gaps in technological skills and infrastructure in the public service. This hampers and places additional pressure on public servants who are expected to deliver high-quality services without the necessary tools or training.

The PSA calls on the Ministers of Public Service and Administration and Finance to invest in continuous professional development and modernise the public service with appropriate technologies. Government must conduct a comprehensive workload audit to address the imbalance between staffing levels and service demands. Cadre deployment must end to prioritise merit-based appointments to restore professionalism and public trust. There is urgent need to engage meaningfully with unions to co-create a sustainable and dignified future for public servants to address these challenges. Public servants as educators, healthcare workers, administrators, and protectors of public welfare and safety deserve more than token increases and political rhetoric.

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