

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA warns Department of Home Affairs to remunerate employees for working extended hours
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The Public Servants Association (PSA), the majority trade union representing employees at the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), has noted with caution the DHA's introduction of extended working hours on Saturdays.

Whilst the PSA supports the initiative to provide services, it is critical that the wellbeing of employees is considered. Employees are reporting a workload that is too high for the DHA's current capacity of only 40% of its total establishment, resulting in employees being overburdened. The extension of hours does alleviate employees' workload during the week. The PSA, however, demanded that the DHA puts in place clear plans to manage work and provide services to clients. Employees should not be exploited by making them work extended hours without overtime payment. The PSA previously challenged the DHA at the Constitutional Court regarding extended working arrangements without overtime payments as per the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act*. The PSA does not oppose the extended hours but warns the DHA not to exploit the Union's members. Employees must be compensated for the additional hours worked. The Constitutional Court ruling was a major achievement, and employees must be treated with respect and paid for overtime work to provide quality services to clients in a productive environment.

The PSA was reliably informed that the DHA experienced operational and services delivery challenges owing to system failures and a shortage of staff amidst a high demand for services by clients. Many citizens, including those with permanent resident permits, require essential services such as ID documents, passports, birth certificates, and marriage registrations. The extended hours are aimed at reducing queues during the week to allow as many clients as possible to be served and expedite services delivery in line with the core mandate to provide enabling documents.

The DHA extended operating hours for specific periods to assist naturalised citizens and permanent residents with Smart ID cards. The decision was aimed at supporting matriculants and ease pressure on clients during peak hours. The extended hours would include offices operating specifically from 08:00 to 13:00 on Saturdays from 17 to 31 May 2025.

The PSA further urges the DHA to fast track the envisaged digitalisation transformation project, aimed at reducing queues and backlogs. Systems must be improved to support service delivery and relieve employees of high workloads. The PSA maintains that an extended working-hours arrangement is not sustainable as the DHA has budget constraints. The DHA must drive a working model to serve citizens whilst also considering employees.

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