

MEDIA RELEASE

PSA welcomes increase in National Minimum Wage: Calls for full inclusion of EPWP workers

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EMBARGO

None

ENQUIRIES

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) welcomes the announcement by the Minister of Employment and Labour, increasing the statutory National Minimum Wage (NMW) from R28.79 to R30.23 per hour from 1 March 2026.

This upward adjustment is meaningful progress towards protecting South Africa's most vulnerable workers and ensuring that wages keep pace with the rising cost of living. The increase will benefit workers across various sectors, including farm workers and domestic workers, as explicitly highlighted in the Minister's statement. The PSA views this as a positive step towards reducing income inequality and promoting dignified work for all who contribute to the economy.

Whilst supporting the adjustment, the PSA remains concerned that workers under the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) continue to be excluded from the statutory NMW framework owing to their special employment dispensation. As per the published announcement, EPWP workers' hourly wage will only increase from R15.16 to R16.62, which is barely above half of the new NMW. The PSA reiterates the Union's long-standing position that all workers performing essential labour, irrespective of contractual categorisation, deserve equal protection under the country's labour standards. EPWP workers, who often carry out physically demanding and socially valuable work, remain amongst the most economically vulnerable. Excluding them from full NMW protection entrenches a two-tier wage system that undermines the principles of fairness, dignity, and social justice.

The PSA urges the Department of Employment and Labour and the National Minimum Wage Commission to review the exclusion of EPWP workers from the statutory NMW without delay. The PSA also calls for a phased integration plan to align EPWP wages with the statutory minimum to reduce the existing wage disparity. It is critical to ensure stronger oversight and enforcement, particularly in sectors employing vulnerable workers, to prevent attempts to offset wage increases through unlawful changes to working hours or conditions, practices which the Minister has underscored as unfair labour practices.

The PSA applauds government's continued commitment to raising the wage floor, but stresses that true transformation will only be achieved once every worker, including those in the EPWP, are afforded the full dignity of equal labour protections and a living wage.

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