

**MEDIA RELEASE**                      **PSA welcomes the opening of Tzaneen Correctional Centre**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) welcomes the opening of the Tzaneen Correctional Centre in Limpopo's Mopani District, which will go a long way to resolve the problem of overcrowding of prisons in the region. The new facility was increased from a capacity of 68 to 501 inmates and will house medium classified offenders who were sentenced to 15 years and below. Furthermore, the centre is well equipped with the latest technology and has an array of skills programmes that will benefit offenders.

The Department will however only derive maximum benefit if the Centre is adequately and appropriately staffed, it is well known that there is a serious problem of understaffing within the Department of Correctional Services. Overcrowding and understaffing exposes both inmates and employees to possible danger. The problem of attacks on correctional officials by inmates is well documented and can be attributed to unhealthy and impractical inmate ratio, hence correct staffing is critical for the provision of a safe working environment. Equally, the inmates are not safe as the number of officials are not able to adequately intervene should there be unrest within the cells.

The issue of official residential accommodation for the officers needs to be fast-tracked, noting the nature of the work of Correctional Centres and in line with what has been provided in other Centres in the country. One of governments failures is the maintenance of the buildings, which often results in spending the of millions of Rands to repair these dilapidated and neglected building, hence the PSA calls upon the Department to ensure the implementation of a proper and proactive maintenance plan of this facility.

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