

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA welcomes speedy intervention by Department of Basic Education in sanitation crisis at Nyonithwele Secondary School in Edendale, Pietermaritzburg
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The Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA) welcomes the speedy intervention by the Department of Basic Education in assisting with a sanitation crisis that has affected learners and educators, resulting in a temporary shutdown of Nyonithwele Secondary School in Edendale area, Pietermaritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal.

The School has an ongoing water and sanitation crisis, which has led to intolerable conditions, as the School has not had properly functioning toilets for at least two years. There is a failing drainage system, and pipes are leaking, which also affect the School's water bill.

The School was shut down temporarily owing to a protest by concerned parents and members of the School Governing Body. Parents started this protest as they had been complaining about the School's toilets and felt these had been neglected by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. This situation has caused several learners to fall ill and poses safety and health hazards for learners and employees at the School. This sanitation issue has violated the dignity and infringed on the rights of learners and employees. There has been a high absenteeism rate, which is a major concern, especially for Grade-12 learners, as they are approaching a critical time of trial exams. The rights of employees are affected as they work in an environment that does not comply with health and safety standards in line with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

The PSA therefore welcomes the donation of ten portable toilets that were made available by the Department of Basic Education as a temporary solution to the water and sanitation issue at the School. Teaching has resumed after a two-day closure of the School. PSA welcomes this speedy intervention, but calls on the Department to ensure that permanent, long-term infrastructure repairs are planned and implemented. The School's leadership, in partnership with the community, stakeholders and the PSA, are awaiting detailed timelines for permanent improvements to fully restore the dignity of learners and employees.

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