

**MEDIA RELEASE**

PSA worried about recurring pattern of learner-transport accidents

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**EMBARGO**

None

**ENQUIRIES**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) noted President Cyril Ramaphosa's recent call for immediate action to make scholar transport safe following the devastating wave of learner-transport tragedies across South Africa.

Whilst the PSA acknowledges and appreciates the President's sentiments, the Union remains deeply frustrated that such calls have become a familiar refrain after preventable disasters, whilst structural and systemic failures that place children in harm's way persist unabated. Over the past few years, the country has witnessed a tragic, recurring pattern of learner-transport accidents. These include the Mitchells Plain crash in 2023 that claimed the lives of five children, the Fochville horror crash in 2024 that killed eleven pupils and the driver, and the Vanderbijlpark crash in January 2026, where more than ten learners died in a collision between a minibus taxi and a truck. Days ago, traffic officers in Limpopo intercepted a grossly overloaded seven-seater vehicle, transporting 22 learners. Numerous other incidents involving blatant disregard for traffic laws and safety standards by scholar-transport operators further demonstrate that the country is facing a full-blown crisis in learner transport.

Whilst government has managed to provide scholar transport to approximately 700 000 learners, serious challenges remain. These include the continued use of unroadworthy vehicles, inadequate enforcement of safety regulations, and chronic failures by government institutions to pay service providers on time. A glaring example occurred in North West in 2025, where hundreds of learners were left stranded for days owing to non-payment of scholar-transport contractors. As a result, routine vehicle inspections were missed, buses were not serviced, and roadworthiness certificates lapsed, directly compromising the safety of learners.

The PSA calls on the Department of Transport, nationally and provincially, to urgently address the deteriorating state of roads and transport infrastructure, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas where scholar-transport accidents are most prevalent. Poorly maintained roads, inadequate signage, lack of lighting, and unsafe intersections significantly increase the risk of accidents. Road safety cannot be separated from road quality. Learner-transport safety will remain elusive without sustained investment in infrastructure maintenance and upgrades.

Regrettably, government's response after each tragedy has followed the same pattern of expressions of sympathy, promises of reform, and renewed commitments that fail to translate into meaningful change. In light of the continued loss of young lives and persistent system failures, the PSA calls for an urgent convening of a National Scholar Transport *Imbizo*.

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