

MEDIA RELEASE	Public Protector’s findings at WF Knobel Hospital in Limpopo shocking
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is shocked by the Public Protector’s findings during her visit at WF Knobel Hospital in Moletjie in Limpopo to conduct a site inspection.

The PSA has on numerous occasions pointed out problems at the Hospital that necessitated intervention by the Head of the Department and the MEC. These attempts failed to yield results and instead of dealing with the problems ranging from provision of functional and proper working tools, COVID-19 regulations and *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)* compliance as well as flawed recruitment processes, the Limpopo Department of Health opted to intimidate shop stewards with suspension and ultimately charges to silence them. State resources have furthermore been used to approach the court for interdicting employees and union representatives. The PSA regards these actions as a waste and abuse of government resources. It was alleged that the directive was issued to dismiss a PSA shop steward. The PSA will, however, not allow this abuse of power and will pursue justice to ensure that not only shop stewards, but all employees of the hospital are protected.

As expected by the PSA, the Public Protector’s site inspection revealed the shocking state of neglect at the Hospital. The dilapidated building’s roof and walls require attention. The issue of understaffing was glaring and is aggravated by the suspension of eleven employees. The pharmacy has no working cold room, the only X-ray machine is dysfunctional and there are no ECG machines in ambulances.

The Public Protector pointed at the poor management at the hospital, which could be attributed to the incompetence of the CEO and his management team. The CEO was brought to the Hospital by the MEC owing to many problems associated with poor service delivery. She subsequently committed to return to the Hospital for a 100-day assessment. Whilst labour awaited the return of the MEC for the said assessment, the post was advertised and filled by the same CEO. The PSA, however, questioned his competence having witnessed a lack of management capabilities. It was shocking that the CEO’s initial appointment letter was signed by the MEC as it is highly irregular for the MEC to sign appointment letters of employees as this task normally rests with the HOD.

The PSA calls upon the Public Protector to ensure that the matter receives the necessary attention as the health and safety of employees remain non-negotiable. Sub-standard personal protective equipment, a lack of proper working tools, and poorly maintained buildings pose risks to employees and contravenes the *OHSA*. The PSA urges the Public Protector to ensure that those in power are called on to account and not reduce this visit to a mere public relations stunt that will not help the Hospital’s employees and people of Limpopo.

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