

MEDIA RELEASE	Reconfiguration of state institutions: PSA appeals to President for holistic approach
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The Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA), representing some 250 000 public-sector employees, has called on President Cyril Ramaphosa to approach the intended reconfiguration of state institutions in a holistic manner in the interest of service delivery.

In a letter to the President, the PSA pointed out that the reconfiguration is regarded as a necessity by the Union to ensure that the Cabinet size is reduced, the entitlements as contained in the Ministerial Handbook are managed to combat corruption, curb wastages, and most importantly, the removal of functions that do not added value to society and the economy. The PSA indicated that given the current magnitude of socio-economic challenges in South Africa, it is accepted that the intended reconfiguration is not aimed at necessarily reducing the headcount in the Public Service but can bring about a reduction in the size of Cabinet. The Union reiterated that a bloated Cabinet, which is easily identifiable, should not be seen in the same light as the myth that the Public Service is bloated. Public servants have become scapegoats for problems that are essentially created in the political domain, while they are at the coalface of engineering the developmental state to deliver service and give priority to the social and economic challenges faced by the majority of South Africans.

The PSA informed the President that in an effort to provide support to the intended programme of government, the Union commissioned research to ensure that the process will serve its purpose based on the strategic perspective on public-sector reforms, the future outlines of institutional reconfiguration, and the restructuring of government. The most significant change under the PSA plan would be the merger of a number of departments, reducing the total number of departments and high-level agencies from 47 to 29, by merging 28 departments and agencies into ten mega-departments. This would save on key costs such as ministerial pay and administration costs, whilst also increasing the efficiency of government.

The PSA is of the view that the current process embarked on by government to grant early-retirement packages to employees aged between 55 and 59 years will not serve the intended purpose. This will rather result in the erosion of skills and expertise in the Public Service, further destroy the morale of public servants and undermine service delivery and the performance of the Public Service. Unions were clear in the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council that they are not in support of this process as the employer could not provide the necessary Human Resource plans on how skills will be transferred.

The PSA warned that to undertake the reconfiguration on a piecemeal approach, merely in support of cost-saving, will not serve the intended purposes but rather create unintended and negative consequences. The Union advised that the process should be conducted in a holistic manner.

The PSA appealed that the current offering of early-retirement and voluntary-severance packages to public servants be placed on hold until the reconfiguration of government takes place and that the consequences be managed accordingly in a fair and proper manner.

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