

MEDIA RELEASE	COVID-19: PSA welcomes positive meeting with Ministers to ensure critical workers' health and safety
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is encouraged by the Government's commitment and willingness to involve unions in a working committee to coordinate provincial and district matters and resolve pressing issues affecting critical workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The PSA, which represents more than 240 000 public servants, believes that the amicable collective resolution of critical matters is a key factor whilst also ensuring that employees tasked to perform essential duties during this time should be able to do so without interruption or threat to their health and safety.

At a meeting on 8 April 2020 with the Ministers of Health, Employment and Labour and Trade and Industry, the PSA raised various issues, including the payment of circumstantial allowance for all employees who are at the coalface to combat the spread of the virus as well as the treatment of infected patients. Transport for employees and the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) at some institutions were also addressed positively. Consensus was reached that unions should be more involved in steering committees across the country to address institutional-specific needs before these are escalated to national level.

The PSA welcomes the commitment by the Ministers that no Health worker can be coerced to perform any function without the necessary protective clothing. It was further indicated that employees should be guided by the standard operating procedures that direct the specific PPE required for certain areas of work. The PSA also welcomes the Ministers' commitment to address the issues raised and the fact that deliberations will continue to resolve challenges and to address the PSA's request for circumstantial allowances.

The PSA is pro-actively involved in steering Committees in Government departments to ensure *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)* compliance and assist in resolving workplace challenges in the Union's efforts to support the battle against the virus whilst ensuring employees' safety. The Union applauds Government's commitment to prioritise the creation of healthy and safe working conditions for its employees, not only during the COVID-19 pandemic, but to be exemplary with *OHSA* compliance being the norm.

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