

MEDIA RELEASE **Western Cape not ready to reopen schools**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), is concerned that not all schools are ready and prepared to provide reasonable care to protect learners, educators, and staff against possible COVID-19 infections at school in the Western Cape.

As a premise to these concerns are the infection rate statistics which places Western Cape as the epitome of infections with a 65% ratio of infection of the combined total in South Africa. Adding to that, is fact that winter season is here which invites risks such as flu and the common cold, as well as making social distancing practices impossible during intervals due to rainy weather conditions. It will also be unviable to keep windows and door open during this season.

Despite training being one of the non-negotiables in the management of COVID-19, the PSA have noted with grave concern that there is still no proper training provided to educators and non-educators, such as the correct removal of masks, the sanitizing of objects and hands after touching, the necessity and precautions of wearing gloves, to mention a few. Although it is assumed to be common knowledge by now, it cannot be presumed to be known to all personnel and learners and it is imperative that this training be done in a serious and diligent manner.

Affluent schools in WC are currently able to accommodate Grade 12 and Grade 7 return of learners in relation to social distancing, but it is going to be a disaster when other grades return to the school as there simply is not enough space at any of the schools. Currently the under privileged schools are not even able to meet the social distancing criteria due to lack of space and infrastructure and when the other grades return as well, the potential exposure and risk to infection a huge concern to the PSA.

The smaller and less privileged schools in WCED have to date, not met all the non-negotiable criteria, ranging from insufficient masks, sanitizers and cleaning products. The quality of education is also questioned owing to specialised educators who might need to go into quarantine/isolation.

It has come to PSA attention that an element of discrimination exists at some schools where learners whom have parents working as essential service front line staff at institutions such as DCS, SAPS and Health, are told to stand one side and sent home for parents to take them to Pathcare before being allowed to enter the school. This is totally unacceptable and we have advised our members, employed at schools, to refrain from any such practise and to report any such incident to the PSA without delay.

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