

MEDIA RELEASE Workers' Day: Reclaiming workers' power and dignity in age of crisis

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) marks Workers' Day 2026 against a backdrop of sustained economic pressure and growing uncertainty for public servants.

The 2026 theme, "Reclaiming Workers' Power and Dignity in an Age of Crisis", reflects an urgent need to reset the balance between employer obligations and worker realities. There is a widening disconnect between policy decisions and the lived experience of workers. Public servants are expected to maintain service-delivery standards whilst absorbing rising costs, stagnant wages, and increasing deductions. This situation is not sustainable. If worker dignity is to be restored, the current trajectory must be challenged directly and decisively.

Recent increases in Government Employees Medical Scheme contributions are a case in point. Healthcare access remains non-negotiable, but affordability of such access is increasingly questionable. Public servants are effectively expected to carry additional financial weight without corresponding relief or flexibility. This raises a fundamental issue: At what point does a benefit become a burden?

The PSA is clear - there must be greater accountability and transparency in how these increases are determined. Importantly, workers must not be locked into limited options that do not reflect their financial realities. A credible discussion on choice, affordability, and value is long overdue.

Reclaiming worker power requires more than engagement platforms that yield minimal outcomes. It requires a shift towards meaningful participation, where worker voices influence decisions. The PSA will continue to pursue structured, outcome-driven engagement that prioritises the financial and professional well-being of public servants.

Workers' Day should not be reduced to symbolic recognition. It should serve as a checkpoint, which forces all stakeholders to assess whether current systems are enabling or undermining workers. At present, the indicators are clear that without decisive intervention, worker dignity will continue to be eroded. The PSA is committed to ensuring that public servants are not passive recipients of decisions, but active participants in shaping their conditions of service. Restoring dignity is not a long-term ideal, but an immediate requirement.

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