

## Virtual Meeting: Special Labour Relations Forum

The virtual meeting took place on the 27 May 2020 and the following were discussed.

### State of readiness for the return to work of employees

The employer presented its document regarding the state of readiness for the return to work of the employees and indicated that this is a working document or a mother plan and that they want to consult with labour at the virtual labour relations forum meeting. Management reported that the purpose of the working document is to prepare the workplace environment for the return of employees to work and monitor compliance on COVID-19. And that their plan is not to call all employees to return to work but the staggered return of employees to work would be the approach to comply with the one-third staff recall. Management also indicated an employee's appropriateness to work remotely, heads of department should consider the higher risk COVID-19 poses to vulnerable employees, including those over the age of 60 and those with co-morbidities.

Employees will be issued with PPE's, whereby each person will be issued with two face masks so that one facemask is available when the other is being washed. The sanitisers, social distancing measures, symptom screening, disinfectants, hygiene, temperature testing, and ventilation is extensively covered in the government notice. COVID-19 observation rooms will be established at all offices and manned by employees with medical or first-aid knowledge. The PSA requested the Department to submit the actual implementation plan for inputs instead of the draft plan.

The PSA also raised the concern that the documents were poorly drafted, since they are too generic and lack of specifications as the document does not have time frames or figures in terms of how many employees in the department who are above the age of 60 year age group. It is also silent in determining who are essential and critical employees, it lacks important information, such as who will be the person responsible to operate temperature scanners and when will these employees be trained. The PSA also enquired as to when the necessary PPE's will be procured and delivered to the workstations. The PSA requested that an employee health and wellness programme comorbidity questionnaire, that was sent to all employees to disclose their chronic illnesses, be withdrawn since it violates doctor-patient confidentiality.

The PSA also pointed out that in uThukela and uMzinyathi Districts, they have called all staff to resume work without complying with the one-third and social distancing rules. Management responded to the concerns raised by PSA and it was agreed that the employee health and wellness programme comorbidity questionnaire will be withdrawn, and the two Districts will be investigated for non-compliance. Parties agreed that the working plan document will be forwarded to labour and that

the labour should submit inputs by 29 of May 2020 and that the next virtual labour forum meeting will be on 3 June 2020 and the return to work of the employees is postponed until parties finalise the return to work plan.

**For more information members can contact Mr Mbongeni Mbanjwa at 082 880 8966 or Ms Nondumiso Mvubu on 060-8788248**

GENERAL MANAGER