

Update: COVID-19 Northern Cape - Namaqualand Labour Relations Forum (LRF)

On 5 August 2020 the Department of Health's Namakwa District in the Northern Cape held a LRF for the first time in a while. The PSA welcomes this and encourages other Districts to do the same, especially in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. PSA ensured that the LRF is taken seriously to address COVID-19 imperatives and other labour-related issues in the province.

The submitted the following agenda points for discussion:

Ambulance escorts by Professional Nurses

This is not a new matter and at Abram Esau Hospital in Calvinia the complaint persists. The PSA's view is that Professional Nurses act outside their scope when they escort patients owing to EMS staff shortages and intimidation by authorities. The employer committed to provide a resolution before the next sitting.

Housing allowances

Members reported that the employer failed to conclude several housing allowance applications, which raised discontent with affected members. The employer indicated that it will investigate areas of concern and provide a report within a week. The PSA was requested to provide names of affected members.

Outstanding overtime payment for overtime duly worked

At Abram Esau Hospital members lodged complaints that overtime took long to pay out and, in some cases, not at all. This was raised with the LRF. The employer indicated that by the time of the sitting all outstanding overtime was paid. The PSA had earlier requested that overtime payments be prioritized going forward.

Absence of staff meetings: Abram Esau Hospital

Members were concerned that amidst COVID-19 and all its implications, the Hospital should be holding meetings regularly and indicated that there are no staff meetings. This was denied by the acting CEO and as a resolution the matter will be revisited to increase meeting frequency.

Appointment of Labour Relations Officer: Namaqualand

The PSA submitted the need for a Labour Relations Officer in this vast District. All other districts have LROs to dispense with grievances and advise as stipulated in section 1 of the *LRA*. This will save time and curb resource wastage in finding solutions to labour disputes and enhancing labour peace at the workplace. The employer agreed to give priority to the matter.

COVID-19 related matters

The LRF dealt with COVID-19 guidelines, protocols, shortcomings and the need for more engagement on areas of concern. Presentations were made on all aspects of Human Resources, PPE, rate of infections, OHS Committee and labour engagements. The PSA noted the efforts by the Namaqua District to curb the pandemic.

Members are encouraged to submit agenda items as points of concern to be addressed at the LRF directly to the PSA's Russle Bindeman (082 883 7563 or russle.bindeman@psa.co.za).

GENERAL MANAGER