

Non-payment of cash awards: 2019/20-financial year

As members are aware, on 26 February 2021 the Director-General issued a communique to the entire DTIC staff, informing them that he has decided to not pay cash awards for the 2019/20-financial year. The PSA was shocked by the said letter as the employer has not at any point consulted labour on the matter or made any indication that there was an intention not to pay. In reaction to the announcement the PSA requested an urgent special Departmental Chamber meeting, which took place on 8 March 2021.

When the employer was asked about the reasons for not paying cash bonuses, the employer reported that the factors the DG considered in deciding not to pay cash awards is the public narrative, which includes the views expressed in the media and elsewhere that the public sector is not adversely affected by the pandemic, there were no wage cuts and public servants did not lose employment. It was the opinion of the DG that owing to the poor economic outlook of the general public at large it would be insensitive to pay cash awards to qualifying DTIC employees, especially top officials.

When asked who the DG consulted before arriving at the decision, it was indicated that he consulted his peers and colleagues in other departments who also took a similar decision.

The PSA indicated that the employer's decision is not reasonable considering the hardships faced by employees of the Department who have not been paid salary increases in the current financial year. The DG should have at the very least consulted employees through labour before taking such a decision. The manner in which he elected to act unilaterally clearly undermines collective bargaining as well as workplace democracy upon which labour peace is founded.

The PSA reserved the rights of its members on the matter and invoked clause 17 of the GPSSBC Governance Rules for Chambers, which calls for the General Secretary of the Council to conduct a facilitation between parties to prevent a dispute. Should the facilitation process fail, the PSA intends to declare a dispute and challenge the employer's decision. Members will be updated on developments.

GENERAL MANAGER