

Poor working conditions at Musina Magistrate Court

Members will recall that the Musina Magistrate Court was closed by a Labour Inspector upon intervention by the PSA as members were working in a dangerous and unhealthy environment. Subsequently, the Department decided to temporarily hear cases under the trees, which is demeaning and disrespectful to employees and members of the public. The arrangement is unprofessional and exposes officials to danger as security has not been enhanced.

Other sensible options such as provision of temporary mobile structures could have ensured that whilst services are not disrupted, the dignity of customers and employees is also maintained. Priority cases could have been transferred to other courts.

This arrangement is equally in contravention of *section 8* of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, which dictates that every employer must provide and maintain, as far as is reasonably practicable, a working place that is safe and without risk to the health of employees. Working outside exposes employees to unnecessary risk and danger and the employer should reconsider and urgently provide alternatives that are conducive and safe to employees.

The Constitution, which is the supreme law of the country, provides that everyone has the right to dignity and working under trees will never qualify for such. The clients that the Department is serving are not enjoying the right to dignity and the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that the rights of individuals are protected. The arrangement is unfortunately going against the spirit of justice and fair labour practices for the people of Limpopo.

The PSA has written a letter to the Regional Manager to direct him to reconsider the decision to have employees working under trees and awaits the response. The Department must urgently devise alternative arrangements without risking the health and safety of employees.

GENERAL MANAGER