

## Update: Northern Cape Department of Home Affairs

The number of positive COVID-19 cases is rising sharply in the country and the Northern Cape. Subsequently there is also a substantial increase in the number of cases reported at the Department of Home Affairs in the Northern Cape, especially those that serve as frontline institutions, are experiencing a spike in Covid-19 cases.

Notwithstanding the above, the Department appears to fail to adhere to current protocols, that is, tracing of contacts, and cleaning or decontamination of offices where a positive case is reported. The PSA is aware that after a meeting in Kuruman Local office, two officials who were in the same meeting tested positive. However, some officials who were attending the meeting were not even mentioned in the contacts list. The meeting took place two weeks ago but, to date, the office has not been decontaminated or sanitised as there is no cleaning of the office taking place. The PSA addressed this issue with the Department to investigate allegations of breach of COVID-19 protocols, but it appears that no investigation has been made since no feedback has been provided to the PSA yet. It is concerning since officials from different parts of the province were present in the meeting.

While the Delta variant of the virus is primarily prevalent in Gauteng, all the necessary precautions must be taken in all provinces. The Court in *Eskort Limited vs Stuurman Mogotsi* pronounced that when an employee tests positive and does not disclose this to the employer, he/she can be dismissed and that a criminal prosecution can apply. The same may apply to managers who fail to implement protocols that include, closing of offices, where necessary, to decontaminate, have the office cleaned, release employees during water disruptions and have screening protocols observed.

The PSA calls on members in Kuruman to not enter the office until it has been sanitised and the Northern Cape Provincial Manager of the Department to intervene in this matter. Members can contact the PSA on (053) 839 1000.

GENERAL MANAGER