

Update: Regional Consultative Forum Meeting

Inconsistent Application and Implementation of COVID-19 Regulations

The PSA raised concerns that when there is a positive COVID-19 case some offices in the region are closed and fumigation is done, and employees are requested to stay away from work for a day or two to allow for decontamination of the office, but some offices remains open during deep cleaning, which exposes members and the public to the possibility of contracting COVID-19. This is not in line with COVID-19 protocols. The PSA is also concerned about the delay in taking action when there are COVID-19 cases reported in the region.

The PSA called for an inclusive, transparent, and public SASSA action plan to be known and extended to every employee, so that everyone is aware of what to do in the event of a positive case. The PSA also called for a compliance status report of KZN SASSA offices. Management accepted the concern raised by the PSA and they committed to ensure that the relevant Accounting Officer acts appropriately, and they further noted the issue of transparency and they will improve on their action plan when there is a COVID-19 case reported.

Short Notice for Labour to attend meetings at SASSA

It has become noticeable that labour is given short notice to attend to activities such as meetings with the Regional Executive Manager or to observe on the shortlisting and interviews processes within the Department. The PSA is not informed timeously. The PSA requested that reasonable notice be given unless there is an urgent meeting. Management will improve and give reasonable notice for labour to attend meetings.

Extension of R350 Social Relief Of Distress Fund until March 2022

The PSA raised the above issue that when the R350 SRD grant was introduced, the employer indicated that it will not have an impact on employees working in districts and local offices, as the receiving of such an application and processing them will be done electronically and away from the districts and local offices. The employer has since changed this approach without consulting labour on the change of approach and assurance that it will not expose employees to an unsafe working environment. The PSA further mentioned that it is common cause that the nation is still battling with COVID-19 and we should not relax COVID-19 protocols. The PSA requested the employer to prepare a presentation on the following:

- Rationale behind the change of approach.

- Risk assessment report on the potential impact of the new approach.
- Any other relevant information that may be of important to parties.

Management mentioned that they do have reports and the reports are available.

Online Pilot Project

When the pilot project was introduced, it was a local office project and district offices were the coordinators of the project. The PSA reminded the employer that this is a pilot project and not yet implemented as it is not yet been tabled or discussed at the SNBF, but the Durban District management has now indicated that:

- The online pilot project is now centralised to district offices as per Regional Offices instruction.
- The same project is now being implemented.
- The PSA seeks clarity pertaining to the online social grant pilot project, as it is being centralised to district offices.

Managements response was that the online project is still a pilot project and at the beginning of 2021 they started receiving applications from the clients. The decision was taken that district officials can be used to assist the local office staff to finalise the backlog which in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, and it is on those conditions that the district was asked to assist.

Difficulty terminating other unions causing Dual Membership

The PSA raised concerns regarding dual membership and an inability to cancel other unions by the employer, as this was also raised previously in our engagement and we were advised to send cancellations to the labour relations manager. It was reported that cancellations were sent to the manager and the finance section, but members are still experiencing double deductions. The PSA is requesting the Department to come up with a clear directive to resolve this issue, as the PSA followed Section 13 of the *LRA*, but the problem still exists.

Management responded that they would attend to the matter and provide the PSA with feedback.

GENERAL MANAGER