

## Youth Day: PSA urges government to take decisive action

On 16 June 1976, thousands of young people took their pleas for equal and fair education to South Africa's streets. Their demands included improved school infrastructure and a solution for overcrowded classrooms. In 2022, the situation facing South African youths has not improved, despite 27 years of democracy.

The PSA remains extremely concerned that the critical issues raised during those protests, are still prevalent. In addition, new challenges can be added to the list. The country's school infrastructure is in a crisis. According to a National Education Infrastructure Management System report published in 2021, 69% of public schools do not have libraries, and 80% do not have laboratories. Of the more than 23 000 public schools, 5 167 still have unlawful pit toilets, 5 836 do not have a reliable water supply, and 3 343 are without reliable electricity. Many school buildings are in a poor state, with broken windows, collapsing ceilings, and depilated furniture, further impacting on the health and safety of learners and educators. Many learners leave the schooling system as they cannot afford basics such as school uniform, stationery, and safe transport. These stumbling blocks prevent learners from ultimately entering the labour market and contributing to the economy.

South Africa's rate of youth unemployment stands at a shocking 66.5%, with young South Africans falling deeper into a state of poverty and depending on social grants. None of government's strategies or economic policies have improved the outlook for the youth. Government's empty promises regarding job creation have left the youth demoralised. Young graduates cannot find employment, whilst the Public Service is bending under the burden of vacancies. The public sector is further not attracting young people owing to cumbersome application processes and poor compensation. The Public Service is destined to struggle as older public servants retire without passing on critical skills. Unaddressed rampant fraud, corruption, and looting of state resources drain resources that should be invested in ensuring quality education for the country's youth, job creation, and reviving the economy.

The PSA continues to invest in addressing health and safety concerns at schools by means of the Union's *#SchoolSafety* project to support a conducive teaching and learning environment. The PSA, however, urges government to take responsibility for the deepening crisis facing the country's youth and take decisive action.

GENERAL MANAGER