

## Workers' Day 2023: Duty to protect gains for workers

Workers' Day 2023 is marked by a period where the South African labour movement is divided on the goals of promoting and protecting the rights and interests of all workers. Unions driven by political affiliations and personal gains have impacted on labour's influence regarding negotiations on the terms of service, benefits, and wages of public servants. This was already evident when in 2018, the PSA was the only Union not to agree to government's three-year wage deal for public servants on which government reneged in 2020. This signified a blatant attack on collective bargaining.

From this it is clear that Workers' Day needs to be more than commemoration of the rights gained by workers since the 1880s. Workers currently have to contend with depressing working and living conditions, various forms of injustice and experience high levels of physical, mental, and emotional strain that could lead to self-alienation, disaffection, despondency, and even hopelessness. Workers are demotivated by poor remuneration, increasing demands on their labour and the fact that they do not determine the value of their labour. These factors impact on their physical and mental wellbeing, forcing them to find ways of rising above these stressors to be productive in the workplaces. The life of workers has become one of hope for a better life whilst continuing to endure hardship. The poor, inconsistent application of labour laws and workplace policies often exacerbates conditions in the workplace.

The PSA continues to address and eradicate factors that impact on public-sector employees' wellbeing. In addition, the PSA assists future workers through various initiatives. These include the #SchoolSafety project, aimed at creating a safe school environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. The PSA will further during Workers' Month donate rechargeable LED solar lights to thousands of disadvantaged Grade 11 and 12 learners across the country to support them in continuing with their school work during load shedding periods.

On Workers' Day 2023, the PSA calls on all South African workers to continue efforts in pursuit of improvements to their workplaces, including holding employers accountable for unsafe and unhygienic work environments. Workers' Day should also be a solid reminder to workers of their duty to protect the collective bargaining processes that impact on their future as workers.

GENERAL MANAGER