



FOR PSA MEMBERS: **DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT (DFFE)**

19-08-2025

Feedback: DFFE Special Departmental Bargaining Chamber (DBC) meeting

HCM Circular 10 of 2025

Organised labour raised concerns regarding the contents of HCM Circular 10 of 2025, entitled “*Freezing of all appointments as well as the signing of new acting appointments after expiry of the current acting arrangements*”. The Circular indicates that the Minister has issued a directive to immediately freeze all appointments in the Department. It further stipulates that line management will no longer approve any acting appointments and that advertisements, as well as the filling of posts including acting positions, will henceforth require approval by the Minister. The PSA submitted that its members view the Circular as a moratorium on the filling of positions, which the employer strongly denied. The PSA emphasised that the Department is already understaffed, with employees stretched to perform duties beyond their scope to cover long-standing vacancies. The arrangement introduced through the Circular is likely to worsen the situation, as the turnaround time for Ministerial approvals will inevitably be slower than the previous practice where line management could granted approvals.

In response, the employer reiterated that the Circular does not amount to a moratorium on appointments but merely communicates a change in the approval process. Organised labour, however, cautioned that the Circular has been misunderstood by employees and managers, who perceive it differently from the explanation provided during the meeting. This has led to confusion across the Department. The employer advised that a second Circular was issued to address frequently asked questions and to provide clarity on the matter. It was subsequently agreed that a follow-up meeting will be convened for further engagement on the Circular, and the employer will be requested to provide additional clarity to directorates and branches where confusion persists.

GPSSBC Organisational Rights Agreement (GPSSBC Resolution 3 of 2014)

The PSA raised concern with the employer regarding the manner in which the employer has opted to apply the provisions of the Organisational Rights Agreement in relation to the convening of union members' meetings. The employer has interpreted the agreement to mean that the entire Department, with all its offices, constitutes a single workplace. As a result, each union would only be permitted to hold one members' meeting per month. This interpretation implies that if the PSA convenes a members'

meeting in Gauteng, no other PSA meetings can be held in other provinces during the same month, limiting such meetings to one province or office per month.

The PSA cautioned the employer that this restrictive interpretation would not only obstruct the Union's ability to function effectively but would also have a negative impact on the employer. Specifically, the PSA highlighted that consultation processes, such as policy reviews, rely on the Union's ability to consult broadly with its members before providing meaningful feedback. Despite these concerns, the employer maintained its position, insisting that it was interpreting and applying the agreement correctly, and advised that unions may declare a dispute should they disagree. In response, the PSA proposed that the Chamber invite the Secretary of the GPSSBC to provide guidance on the agreement and clarify the intention of parties when it was concluded. Parties agreed to extend an invitation to the Secretary of Council to attend the next Chamber meeting for this purpose. It was further noted that the rights of all parties would remain reserved regardless of the outcome of such engagement.

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Reuben Maleka
GENERAL MANAGER