



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

24-07-2025

Feedback: DFFE Departmental Bargaining Chamber (DBC) meeting

Determination of vote weights: GPSSBC Chambers 2025/26

The Council presented the following vote weights, which were confirmed. The PSA is still a majority Union in this Department.

Trade Union	Membership	Vote weights
PSA	1 583	52.16%
Sadtu	0	
NPSWU	1	
Total	1 584	
Nehawu	1 093	47.18%
Nupsaw	340	
Total	1 433	
Popcru	3	0.66%
Pawusa	17	
Total	20	
GRAND TOTAL	3 037	100%

The determination is done in terms of the provisions of clause 16.1 of Resolution 1/2012, Governance Rules for Chambers, as of 31 December 2024.

DFFE structure and matching and placing

Members will recall that post the 2019 NMOG process, the Department went through the matching and placing of employees, which was concluded where there were no additional employees to the structure. The employer therefore requested for the item to be removed from the agenda. Parties agreed to remove the item from the agenda.

Policies

The employer reported that parties had a bilateral to engage on the policies listed below and did not receive a response from labour. It was agreed that the employer will afford labour more opportunity to submit inputs. The following policies were circulated to members for inputs:

- Review of Learning and Development Policy
- DFFE Firearms Policy
- Firearms Control SOP
- Revised Security Policy
- Addendum on the Bursary Policy
- Draft Parking Policy
- Revised SCM Policy
- Draft Policy on Remote Working

A follow-up Policy Task Team meeting was agreed to, and labour was requested to submit the names of its representatives and convene a meeting within two weeks.

Purchasing of laptops by employees

The employer sent out a circular that indicated that the Department is not compliant with Treasury regulations on the disbursement of old laptops. The Asset Disposal Committee met and agreed to comply with section 8(D) of the *PFMA*. The regulations identified institutions in education as a first option. However, given that it has already started selling those laptops to employees, it will allow them to purchase until 31 March 2026. Going forward, the Department will follow Treasury Regulations as required.

Re-introduction: Recognition of improved qualifications

Organised labour reintroduced the agenda item of improvement of qualifications as some employees have encountered challenges when applying for the benefit and would often get rejected. They further said that the current policy in its form needs to be re-worked as there are some gaps. The employer noted labour's concerns and committed to reverting to labour as the policy experts were not part of the meeting. The item will remain on the agenda.

Human Capital Management (HCM) Circular 10 of 2025 on freezing of posts

Labour raised concerns regarding the apparent freezing of positions, and the employer's unfair practices in respect of acting appointments. The employer issued *Circular 10 of 2025*, stating budget constraints and that approval will be sought from the Minister for any future appointment before they are filled. The circular further indicated that transfers in the Department will be affected, except for interdepartmental transfers. It also stated that acting posts with or without financial obligations will be affected. The employer submitted that the timeframes will be determined and approved by the Minister. Organised labour reminded the employer that there is an approved structure which has vacancies that were funded. Furthermore, labour could not understand the reason for powers to determine and approve appointments should be given to the Minister in light of the DPSA which uplifted the moratorium on filling of vacancies across the public service.

The employer agreed that there is no longer a moratorium but stated that the Minister is empowered to ensure that the Department does not suffer financially post the 7th Administration having cut budgets of

departments. The employer further stated that the Department's prioritised posts will be filled based on the availability of funds and in a phased manner. Labour requested to be furnished with the approved structure for all vacant and funded posts to make the determination. The PSA rejected the contents of the circular as the non-filling of the vacant funded posts puts a strain on members where they are expected to perform additional functions. Labour also stated that it will not support the notion of expecting employees to act without compensation. The employer noted the PSA's concerns and re-emphasised that there is no moratorium but there is a process as stated above to be followed when considering filling in posts. The employer will go back and reflect on all the concerns raised by the PSA where the issues will be discussed at a special DBC.

Forestry placements

A report was shared by the employer that there was a task team that dealt with consultations with affected employees. A report was submitted to the Chamber where affected employees were placed in other departments closer to their places of residence. A close-up report will be submitted to labour through secretariat for noting and endorsement.

Transfer of officials from Forestry branch

The employer reported that it is in the process of finalising a report that will indicate how many employees are affected and it will be circulated through secretariat for discussion at the next DBC meeting in August 2025. Labour noted the update and will await the promised detailed report.

Skills audit

It was reported that the above-mentioned project started six months ago, and a service level agreement (SLA) was finalised in December 2024. Face-to-face engagements were concluded, and online support was given to those employees who struggled. The following recommendations and findings were identified:

- There was no standardised competency framework.
- All job descriptions needed to be standardised.
- There is a need to improve how questionnaires were designed.
- There is a need to strengthen stakeholder engagements and have targeted communication.
- There is a need to intergrade multi-rater to ensure that the next person does not see what the initial questionnaire reflected.
- There is a need to promote leadership involvement by encouraging middle and senior management to participate.
- Guidance needs to be offered, compile questions.
- There is a need to foster the culture of accuracy for participants to score themselves honestly.
- In the end, the report indicated that there was proper teamwork and that the project was a success and was able to identify challenges and recommended solutions.

The final report will be shared with labour as it could not be transmitted electronically because it is about 121 pages long.

Unilateral changes in DFFE organisational structure

Labour stated that it has come to its attention that the employer has changed the structure where a directorate called Air Quality Authorisation has been moved to another directorate. Labour felt that the

employer is restructuring the Department without its participation. The employer indicated that labour was briefed on a proposal as part of the NMOG Phase 1 after the start-up structure was concurred. It further stated that there is no restructuring, but instead the employer has only moved employees to another directorate, where there are no changes in terms of their conditions of employment, and just changes on reporting lines. Labour was invited to submit information on any changes as the employer is not aware of such, except the above-mentioned directorate with the explanation given above.

OHS matters

Labour brought concerns about the state of offices across all provinces and regions, where it was reported that employees are made to work under inhabitable conditions. An example being the Cape Town offices, where during rainy weather ceilings collapse and buckets have to be used to collect water that drips into the office. The employer's view was that there is an OHS committee that is empowered to deal with issues of occupational health and safety and was of the view that those complaints need to be directed there. Labour stated that the issues were reported at OHS committees but there was no resolve. The PSA committed to sending videos and examples of the hazards mentioned. The issue will be dealt with at the planned special DBC to be held on 6 August 2025 as the matter is serious and urgent, failure which will lead to the PSA reporting the matter to the Department of Employment and Labour for recourse.

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