

Update: Bilateral meeting – Meje Clinic water crisis and other matters

The PSA visited Meje Clinic in Bizana on 24 April 2026 to engage members and address ongoing challenges with management. During the members' meeting, the following key issues were raised:

Water crisis at Meje Clinic

Members reported that the water crisis has persisted for over a year, severely affecting patient care and posing serious occupational health and safety (OHS) risks to both employees and patients. The situation is believed to stem from a malfunctioning borehole, electricity challenges, and generator instability. Members expressed reluctance to continue working under such unsafe conditions. It was further reported that dry pipes have led to snakes emerging from the system, creating additional danger. Concerns were also raised about potential non-compliance with professional standards, which could jeopardise nursing licenses. Alarming, fire extinguishers are reportedly without water, as available water is diverted for drinking purposes, placing the facility at high risk in the event of a fire.

Management indicated that steps are being taken to resolve the crisis. A new borehole site has been identified, with work scheduled to commence on 28 April 2026.

Weekend shifts

Members highlighted that although Meje Clinic is officially designated as a community health centre (CHC), it operates as a primary health care (PHC) facility. Staff had voluntarily introduced weekend services, but owing to current conditions, they are no longer willing to continue. Concerns include lack of administrative support, absence of doctors, and no dedicated emergency vehicle on weekends.

The employer confirmed the clinic operates as a PHC. Engagements with the community regarding weekend services are underway, with feedback expected on 30 April 2026. While administrative support has been allocated, there are no doctors on call, nurses rely on telephonic consultations. Emergency services are provided through EMS.

Cleaning staff challenges

Members reported that only one cleaner is responsible for the entire facility. The situation is worsened by a broken washing machine, forcing manual washing of linen. The cleaner has declined weekend shifts owing to personal commitments.

The employer confirmed that recruitment for additional cleaning staff has been finalised. A new service provider has been appointed, with four general assistants expected to resume duties on 4 May 2026. The PSA demanded an immediate halt to manual linen washing, and management agreed to transport linen to nearby facilities.

The PSA expressed serious concern over ongoing OHS violations and has escalated the matter to the Department of Employment and Labour. A follow-up meeting is scheduled for 30 April 2026. The PSA urges leadership to prioritise OHS compliance across the Eastern Cape Department of Health and encourages members to continue reporting workplace challenges. Members are invited to report these anomalies to Ms Zizipho Shukuma at Zizipho.shukuma@PSA.CO.ZA or call the PSA Mthatha Provincial Office a (047) 501 2500.

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