

<b>MEDIA RELEASE</b>	<b>Clairwood Hospital tragedy: PSA demands immediate accountability and safety reforms</b>
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is distressed by the suicide of a psychiatric patient at Clairwood Hospital in KwaZulu-Natal, under the management of RK Khan Hospital, where a fire was deliberately set using hospital-issued sanitizer.

This tragic event claimed a life and raised troubling questions about the Hospital's capacity to protect vulnerable patients and employees. Hospital staff are commended for their efficient evacuation of patients, which prevented further fatalities. This incident, however, underscores a profound failure in the institution's responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of those in its care. A rapid response to disaster is not a substitute for prevention. It is unacceptable that a patient in a psychiatric ward had access to hazardous materials. This oversight reflects a dangerous lapse in basic safety protocols that must be addressed immediately.

The PSA demands urgent action, starting with a complete overhaul of the Hospital's occupational health and safety (OHS) measures. Immediate, comprehensive OHS refresher training is required for all levels of staff and management. Adherence to OHS regulations must not be sporadic. It must be rigorously enforced. It is a matter of life and death, and this incident makes it clear that the Hospital's current approach is inadequate.

The PSA further demands a thorough investigation and risk assessment related to the accessibility and use of sanitizers and other potentially dangerous substances in hospital wards. In this case, the materials intended to ensure hygiene and safety became instruments of harm. This risk must be mitigated through strict control and supervision in high-risk areas such as psychiatric units. Flammable materials must either be heavily restricted or removed from such environments. Staff must be trained to identify and prevent potential hazards.

This tragic event is symptomatic of a larger systemic failure and points at institutional weaknesses that must be corrected with urgency. The PSA will not tolerate half-measures in response to this disaster. There must be full accountability on immediate failures that allowed this incident to occur and for the culture of complacency. The PSA urges health authorities to ensure that psychological support is provided to staff and patients as the emotional toll of such tragedies can be immense.

The PSA calls for swift and decisive intervention from the Hospital's management and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health to prevent a recurrence of such a horrifying incident. The PSA will monitor the Hospital's actions closely and insists on transparency throughout the investigation. The PSA will not hesitate to escalate this matter to the highest levels of government. This incident must be a turning point. Clairwood Hospital and the entire health system must enact the necessary reforms to ensure the safety of patients and employees.

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