

<b>MEDIA RELEASE</b>	<b>Correctional Services: PSA concern about billions allocated to prisoner care amidst other severe challenges</b>
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is concerned about the decision by the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) to allocate R2.4 billion for prisoner care programs, with an additional R1.2 billion earmarked for social reintegration efforts during the 2024/25 financial year.

A projected increase of 1.2% in this regard over the 2025/26- and 2026/27-financial years is cited. The PSA finds this expenditure alarming in view of the ongoing challenges at the DCS, including severe staff shortages, inadequate inmate housing, failure to honour arbitration awards, and delays in procuring essential security systems and uniforms for Correctional Officers. It is concerning that such a significant portion of the budget is directed towards prisoner care and social reintegration, whilst core issues directly impacting on the safety and functionality of correctional facilities remain unresolved.

The PSA agrees that the well-being and rehabilitation of prisoners are crucial matters but must not come at the expense of the safety of Correctional Officers or the effective management of correctional facilities. Overcrowded prisons, compounded by staff shortages and inadequate resources, jeopardise the dignity and rights of inmates and place an enormous burden on employees tasked with maintaining security and order.

The PSA urges the DCS to exercise greater fiscal responsibility by prioritising urgent needs in correctional centres, ensuring the safe custody of inmates and the security of Correctional Officers. High staff turnover, insufficient resources, and delayed procurement processes are placing officials at increased risk and cannot continue. It is unacceptable that, whilst billions are allocated to prisoner care and social reintegration, government struggles to provide adequate support for employees who ensure the running of these facilities. This misalignment of priorities raises serious questions about the commitment by the DCS to effectively manage public funds and address the most pressing issues in the correctional system.

The PSA calls on the DCS to conduct a thorough review of its spending priorities. The authorities must ensure that funds are utilised to directly address the root causes of challenges in correctional facilities, including infrastructure investment, increasing staff capacity, and honouring obligations to Correctional Officers. The continued pressure on Correctional Officers owing to overcrowding, under-resourcing, and delayed procurement must be addressed urgently.

The PSA demands a balanced approach to managing the correctional system's budget. Government must prioritise resolving glaring challenges and ensure that Correctional Officers are equipped and supported to perform their duties safely and effectively.

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