

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**COVID-19 Limpopo: PSA concerned regarding conditions at various NSC marking facilities**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) learnt with shock that 23 NSC markers from Limpopo tested positive for COVID-19, with 13 of them being based at Northern Academy School in Polokwane.

The PSA established that despite this high number of positive cases, those who were in contact with the infected persons have not been isolated or subjected to rapid testing to determine their status. It is further alleged that none of the centres were decontaminated after the positive cases. In addition, the delay in delivering scripts to markers prolonged the time spent together by markers, increasing the chances of infection. The Department of Education has not ensured that markers are working in a conducive environment and did not act promptly in view of the increased number of positive cases. In some centres, cases are kept secret and markers would not know whether their colleagues tested positive or left the centre for personal reasons.

Whilst the marking of Grade 12 scripts is important, it should not happen at the expense of employees who are subjected to a dangerous environment. The PSA previously unsuccessfully attempted to meet with the Head of Department to address the problems that affect workers. This only resulted in some shop stewards being served with lawsuits for attempting to fulfil their role as union representatives and thus silencing them.

The PSA calls on the Department of Education to ensure that COVID-19 protocols are fully implemented at marking centres, including contact tracing, reporting cases to both the Departments of Health and Labour and Employment, and decontaminate affected workplaces to contain the spread of the virus.

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