

MEDIA RELEASE **COVID-19: PSA calls for prioritisation of vaccination for Correctional officials and offenders**

DATE 21 June 2021

EMBARGO None

ENQUIRIES communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA), representing more than 13 000 employees of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), believes that the COVID-19 vaccination of Correctional officials and offenders should be prioritised owing to the high infection rates currently experienced in the country.

The DCS plans to curb the spread of the virus amongst offenders by releasing more offenders early from correctional supervision is adding to high rate of crime in the country. The PSA believes any decision to release offenders early before completion of the relevant rehabilitation programme is morally wrong as this may result in offenders committing further crimes at the expense of communities. The pandemic had a devastating impact on the South African economy, with many sectors reporting job losses with little or no economic growth possible owing to lockdown restrictions. Offenders who are released before completing rehabilitation programmes will thus also finds it extremely difficult to find employment. This is bound to contribute to escalating crime statistics.

The PSA, in the interest of communities, calls on the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services not to release offenders early and rather ensure that the spread of the pandemic is contained in correctional facilities by making vaccines available to officials and offenders without delay.

END

