

MEDIA RELEASE **COVID-19: PSA ‘vindicated’ by MEC’s admission that WF Knobel Hospital failed to implement safety protocols**

DATE 2 February 2021

EMBARGO None

ENQUIRIES communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) has been vindicated after the Limpopo MEC of Health confirmed that the WF Knobel Hospital in Moletjie failed to manage the COVID-19 pandemic.

The PSA had previously highlighted the inadequacy of management to address challenges at the Hospital. During visits to health institutions in the province, the MEC finally discovered the failure of management to properly manage COVID-19 in the Hospital.

The Limpopo Department of Health, under the MEC’s leadership, rather than heeding the PSA’s warnings, suspended and intimidated union representatives, ultimately dismissing them when concerns regarding the poor handling of the virus were raised. Had the MEC and her executive listened to the PSA, they would have realised that the Union had the interests of employees and the Hospital at heart. The Hospital’s management has, however, failed in this regard and the MEC is refusing to acknowledge this, despite recent findings by the Public Protector on management deficiency. The report revealed that the neglected infrastructure, including leaking roofs, inadequate ablution blocks, poor maintenance of electrical appliances such as X-ray machines, dental equipment, laundry equipment, and trolleys make it difficult for employees to perform their jobs. There are no fire extinguishers or exit signs to direct building occupants in case of an emergency, which is an occupational hazard. Cleaning standards are not up to standard owing to the small number of cleaners. The chronic shortage of staff across all sections was also highlighted.

The MEC witnessed the effect of the shortage of staff, including the laundry section that is expected to function with only three employees and having workers resort to asking a nurse to assist. The ward was without lights for three weeks wherein the MEC dubbed it as the worst COVID-19 ward in Limpopo.

The PSA reiterates the Union’s call for a skills audit of the Hospital’s management if the MEC is serious regarding service delivery to the people of Limpopo.

END

