

<b>MEDIA RELEASE</b>	KwaZulu-Natal Water and Sanitation office in crisis, endangering lives owing to negligent authorities
<b>DATE</b>	7 April 2025
<b>EMBARGO</b>	None
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is enraged by the continued failure by the Department of Water and Sanitation's office in Durban in KwaZulu-Natal to address catastrophic conditions that have left workers stranded without safe office accommodation since a transformer explosion at 88 Southern Life Building on in October 2023.

Despite the PSA's ongoing efforts, including repeated engagements with management, other unions, the Department of Public Works, and the landlord, the Union is met with empty promises and negligence. This untenable situation has followed numerous demands from unions, citing blatant non-compliance with occupational health and safety regulations, for workers to be relocated. Management and the landlord continue to drag their feet, showing disregard for the lives and welfare of employees. In November 2024, the Deputy Director-General: Corporate Services came from the Head Office to meet with the landlord, management, and unions, resulting in more empty promises and no resolution in sight. This ongoing failure is a clear indictment of a management system that is not ineffective but dangerously incompetent.

As employees sit idle at home, many suffering from depression and distress, others are being bullied into performing duties without resources, and some being forced back into an unsafe building. Despite the clear non-compliance with safety standards, the building has been an accident waiting to happen for years. When unions requested safety certificates, expired documents were handed over as if employees were expendable. The landlord's promise to provide temporary accommodation has been a lie, and employees are being coerced, alongside Public Works, to return to a hazardous building that has already been deemed unsafe.

Finance staff, Human Resources, and Trading Account employees have been forced to endure gruelling daily and weekly travel to the Midmar Dam offices. This commuting has resulted in hijackings and car accidents owing to travel fatigue. Even the Midmar Dam offices, where these workers have been relocated to, have now been declared unsafe following roof damage caused by recent rain after years of neglect and poor maintenance.

This is no longer a matter of inconvenience. It is a systemic failure that places the lives and safety of employees at risk. The PSA demands that the Minister of Water and Sanitation urgently intervenes to address this crisis. The complete inaction by the provincial management and Head Office has shown that these authorities are incapable and unwilling to resolve this life-threatening issue. The PSA demands immediate and actionable solutions resulting in safe, compliant accommodation for the Union's members as well as holding accountable those who allow this dangerous situation to continue.

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