

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA appalled by Department of Correctional Services decision to cancel employment contracts of 531 learners**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), representing more than 14 000 employees of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), is appalled by the Department's decision to cancel the employment contracts of 531 learners.

The learners were part of a learnership program and were in recent years absorbed after completing the program. The absorption helped to alleviate the serious staff shortages at correctional facilities. In 2018, it was estimated that the DCS needed some 18 000 additional Correctional Officials to ensure that it could fulfil its mandate and ensure that Correctional Officials are working in an environment that maintains the prescribed offender versus official ratio.

The PSA is further shocked that the DCS decided to employ Defence Force employees instead. These employees who came from the Defence Force are not fully trained. The DCS will now need to spend additional resources and time to complete their training. Until this training has been completed, these workers cannot function optimally and need to be assisted by a Correctional Official. The PSA is astonished that the DCS would choose not to absorb fully trained learners who are ready to operate autonomously and rather use employees who need further training before they can be fully operational in a Correctional Centre. It is inconceivable that the DCS will spend additional money on employees at a time that Government is not prepared to pay employees their salary increases that are regulated by Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council Collective Agreement 1 of 2018.

The PSA calls on the National Commissioner of Correctional Services to immediately absorb the learners into permanent positions as the DCS cannot afford a further collapse of its human resources at a time when COVID-19 is placing additional strains on the embattled staff establishment.

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