

MEDIA RELEASE PSA appalled by Mpumalanga Department of Education's misuse of funds

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), the majority trade union representing employees of the Mpumalanga Department of Education, is extremely concerned about the misuse of public funds by the Department.

The Department has failed to prioritise critical infrastructure projects despite receiving an infrastructure budget from National Treasury aimed at maintaining schools and constructing essential facilities. A recent incident highlights the Department's questionable spending. A purported construction of a guardhouse at Ehlanzeni District Office in Kanyamazane, resulted in the renovation of a small, one-room building. This renovation, shockingly, cost more than R3 million. The building, meant to house security officials, remains unused, and only parts of the fence were painted.

The PSA has also been alerted regarding the Department's rush to approve "several maintenance projects" before the close of the 2023/24-financial year, with a total budget of R15 million. These projects were aimed at renovating schools in rural areas and district offices. It, however, appears that much-needed school infrastructure improvements have not materialised. The PSA is alarmed that resources that could have been used to build new classrooms, renovate multiple offices, or eradicate pit toilets at rural schools have been squandered on unnecessary and overpriced renovations. The PSA urges the Department's accounting officer to urgently establish and enforce a system of internal control to ensure the integrity, reliability, and proper allocation of resources.

The Department's blatant disregard for the *Public Finance Management Act*, which promotes transparency, accountability, and sound financial management in government institutions, is unacceptable. The PSA demands that consequence management be implemented against officials involved in this financial mismanagement. Those responsible must be held accountable for siphoning public funds that should be directed toward improving educational outcomes and supporting learners' performance.

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