

**MEDIA RELEASE**                      **PSA calls for accountability and urgent investigation into North West Education MEC's international trip**

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**EMBARGO**                                None

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) strongly condemns the North West MEC for Education's absence from a scheduled meeting with the South African Human Rights Commission, which was meant to address the province's ongoing school-transport crisis.

The MEC's absence demonstrates poor judgement and undermines efforts to resolve pressing issues that require urgent attention. The MEC chose to abandon her responsibilities and undertook an international trip to Turin, Italy whilst education in North West is facing severe challenges. The North West Department of Education is grappling with ongoing issues that threaten the safety and education of learners. These include unreliable and dangerous school transport with thousands of learners, particularly in rural areas, facing significant risks owing to a failing scholar-transport system. Many are forced to walk long distances on unsafe routes to school, endangering their well-being and academic progress. Severe infrastructure deficiencies prevail, with many schools operating under appalling conditions, with dilapidated buildings, inadequate sanitation facilities, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient learning materials.

The lack of educators owing to unfilled vacancies places immense pressure on educators, compromising the quality of education, which is exacerbated by insufficient learning resources. In addition, vast amounts of money allocated for education and school infrastructure have either been misused or remain unspent, worsening the situation at schools.

The PSA urges the North West Premier to immediately initiate an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the MEC's international trip. Should the investigation uncover maladministration or misuse of public funds, the Department of Education must take swift action, including recouping expenses to ensure that public resources are used responsibly and effectively.

The PSA is committed to advocating for improved public education and better working conditions for educators. The PSA urges all stakeholders, including parents, educators, and citizens, to support efforts that prioritise the well-being and academic future of learners in North West.

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