

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA calls for urgent intervention at KwaZulu-Natal Health Services**

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The Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA) is alarmed by the prolonged leadership crisis at the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health, where multiple institutions with acting management positions are subjected to chaos that undermines service delivery.

Affected institutions and positions are Vryheid Hospital (acting CEO), Benedictine Hospital (acting CEO), Ceza Hospital (acting CEO), Grey's Hospital (acting CEO), Newcastle Hospital (acting CEO), Florence Mxenge Hospital (acting CEO), Macord Hospital (acting CEO), Inkosi Albert Luthuli Hospital (acting CEO), as well as an acting Deputy Director-General: Corporate Management Services, acting Deputy Director-General: Clinical and Support Services and acting Deputy Director-General: Clinical Support.

The lack of permanent positions has resulted in a lack of accountability and leadership, uncertainty and low morale amongst staff, ineffective decision-making and planning, compromised service delivery and patient care, as well as wasteful expenditure and resource inefficiency. Acting positions at executive management level of the Department of Health and resulting instability contribute significantly to the many challenges faced by the Department. Some of these acting positions are held by persons who have reached retirement age. It is unacceptable to have retired managers in senior positions for over three years. Such persons must be allowed to retire to make way for qualified professionals to lead and improve the healthcare system. The PSA demands that the Department immediately advertises these positions to allow experienced persons to take on these roles through an open and transparent recruitment process.

The projected overspending in the Department of Health for 2023/24 was around R9 billion. The failure to fill positions on a permanent basis does not assist senior managers in addressing the many crises facing health facilities. The PSA views this as a failure by the Head of the Department of Health and the MEC of Health to prioritise these positions. In these acting roles, some individuals face serious allegations of maladministration yet are still seconded for acting positions. It is unacceptable to have an acting CEO at Inkosi Albert Luthuli Hospital for over four years. Appointing officials who are already on retirement on unnecessary contracts, suspending officials for protracted periods that is costing the Department over R10 million and ongoing litigation on questionable cases all contribute towards overspending.

The PSA urges the Minister of Health and the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal to immediately address this crisis. The PSA demands the appointment of qualified and experienced professionals as permanent CEOs and senior managers to end the destructive cycle of acting appointments. Permanent appointments are crucial to restoring stability, accountability, and efficiency in the healthcare system, ultimately improving service delivery and patient care.

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