

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA calls on Minister of Basic Education to convene urgent stakeholders' meeting on departmental crisis
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The Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA) is calling on the Minister of Basic Education, Ms. Siviwe Gwarube, to urgently convene a meeting with all key stakeholders to address the escalating crisis within the Department of Basic Education.

The Minister recently provided an alarming update regarding the significant budget cuts faced by provincial education departments. According to the Minister, these financial challenges are the result of aggressive budget reductions by the National Treasury, compounded by economic stagnation and fiscal mismanagement across various government sectors. This financial strain is now poised to have a detrimental impact on schools nationwide.

While retrenchments were largely avoided in previous years, the number of learners has surged by more than 290,000 over the past five years, without a corresponding increase in teaching posts. The National Treasury's cost-cutting measures over recent years have forced provincial departments to release contracted teachers and freeze the appointment of new ones, further straining the system.

The PSA is deeply concerned that these budget cuts will exacerbate the already dire staffing situation in schools, where understaffing is a critical issue. Reducing the teaching workforce will have catastrophic consequences for both teaching quality and learning outcomes. The education sector is a cornerstone of the country's development, and further cuts will not only harm students but also contribute to the country's rising unemployment rate by terminating the contracts of teachers, a move that would severely undermine the economy.

The PSA urges the Minister to immediately convene an emergency meeting with all relevant stakeholders, including unions, provincial education departments, and financial experts, to find urgent solutions to this crisis. Education plays a vital role in shaping the future of South Africa, and the Department of Basic Education must reprioritise its budget to avoid any retrenchments. The PSA also calls on the government to explore innovative fiscal solutions that will protect the constitutional right to basic education for all learners.

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