

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA challenges KZN Premier to address misuse of prolonged precautionary suspensions of senior officials and employees**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) urges the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal to conduct a thorough investigation into the alarming rise in precautionary suspensions affecting senior managers and employees across provincial departments.

At the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI), the recent precautionary suspensions of the Head of Department (HOD), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), and other key officials have raised significant concerns. There is growing concern that these actions contribute to a culture of fear and instability in the Department, hindering its ability to function effectively. This disconcerting trend is not isolated to the DPWI. The Department of Sport, Arts, and Culture is facing similar issues. Its CFO has been on suspension for over four months, creating operational disruptions.

The leadership of the new MEC and acting HOD has been marked by a troubling trend of suspensions that raises critical questions regarding legitimacy. Whilst the PSA supports the principles of good governance and the combatting of corruption, these measures must be firmly grounded in justice, fairness, and compliance with collective agreements and labour laws. Precautionary suspensions must not exceed 60 days. Any extension beyond this period must be supported by compelling evidence to avoid unnecessary delays and wasteful expenditure. The PSA cautions against the abuse of suspension processes for personal motivation.

Suspensions should be reserved for instances where credible evidence exists, and due process is followed. Prolonged precautionary suspensions, during which officials continue to receive full pay, represent a significant financial burden on the provincial budget, undermining government's commitment to fiscal responsibility and eroding public trust in accountability mechanisms. The PSA urges the Premier to investigate whether these actions are genuinely focused on addressing misconduct and if there is unnecessary waste and inefficiency that compromise public service. The PSA supports the call for clean governance but maintains that all suspensions must adhere strictly to established disciplinary processes that promote transparency and fairness. Acting appointments during these suspension periods must be conducted with integrity, prioritising qualified individuals through a transparent and competitive selection process.

The PSA urges the Premier to take decisive action in addressing these issues, reinforcing the commitment to uphold the principles of good governance and accountability, and ensuring that public institutions function effectively for the benefit of all KwaZulu-Natal residents. The PSA is ready to engage constructively in this matter and will continue to advocate for the rights of public-sector employees, championing fairness, transparency, and integrity in the public service.

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