

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA concerned about Department of Basic Education missing 31 March 2025 deadline to eradicate pit toilets in KwaZulu-Natal
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The Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA), representing more than 245 000 public-sector employees, acknowledges that significant progress has been made in eradicating pit toilets but is concerned about the Department of Basic Education's (DBE) failure to completely eradicate pit toilets at schools in South Africa's rural areas by 31 March 2025

The Minister of Basic Education in 2024 announced that the deadline for eradicating pit toilets is 31 March 2025. Pit toilets have been used by many communities, especially in rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal, for decades. These undignified pit toilets have resulted in the death of a number of children who fell into the toilets and succumbed as a result of inhaling methane gas. Pit toilets are often nothing but a hole in the ground with no flushing mechanism or waste management system. As a result, water sources are contaminated, diseases are spread, the environment is polluted, and wildlife is harmed.

Government initiatives have included programs aimed at improving sanitation and hygiene, including constructing new flush toilets and waste management systems. Many schools have been provided with flush toilets, but despite progress, there are significant challenges to overcome. These include water shortages and outages, which hinder the use of these facilities owing to limited resources and funding towards these projects.

The PSA has addressed a letter to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, outlining the Union's concerns regarding the Department's lack of urgency with the project in view of the approaching deadline. Recent reports from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to the Provincial Education Portfolio Committee showed that more than 100 schools in KwaZulu-Natal are still using pit toilets.

Every child should have access to a clean environment and proper sanitation. Pit toilets, whilst impacting on the right to access to quality education, denies children of their human right to dignity and safety. The PSA urges the Department to act promptly for the benefit of public servants and learners.

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