

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA concerned regarding timing of announcement to recruit 287 000 Education Assistants by Basic Education**

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EMBARGO None

ENQUIRIES communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) with thousands of members in the Education Sector, is concerned about the sudden announcement made by the Basic Education Department to recruitment of 287 000 Education Assistants towards the last quarter of the school calendar. It was reported that the envisaged employment initiative would run for only 5 months, from 1 November 2021 to 31 March 2022. This while permanent educators worked for most of the school calendar without the necessary support, with the additional challenges of working under difficult Covid-19 conditions throughout the academic year. The Department was supposed to have recruited the Education Assistants from the beginning of the year to ease the workload. The students and the teachers are now preparing for the final exams and these Assistants will remain underutilised during this period.

The PSA supports the initiative to recruit young people into the sector, however, the timing of the announcement remains a concern. The project will not serve its intended purpose for the next three months due to final exams and December holidays. The temporary appointment of the Education Assistants will also not address staff shortages in the sector and the high rate of unemployment in general. The initiative is not sustainable as it does not address the fundamental problems experienced in the sector. The KwaZulu-Natal MEC of Education announced this past weekend that his department intends to retrench over 4000 teachers due to the budget cuts in the sector. Therefore, there is no hope to retain the Assistants after five months under such circumstances. The Department is therefore failing to derive a proper plan to provide effective and efficient services to the country.

The PSA urges government to revisit their plan and consider permanent employment of the Education Assistants as per the provision of the National Development plan.

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