

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA condemns disruption of services at Catherine Booth Hospital in KwaZulu-Natal and demands urgent intervention
DATE	20 February 2025
EMBARGO	None
ENQUIRIES	communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) is extremely concerned about the severe disruption of services at Catherine Booth Hospital in KwaKhoza Reserve, Gingindlovu in KwaZulu-Natal, owing to ongoing community unrest.

The PSA condemns the blockade of the Hospital, which has prevented healthcare workers, patients, and essential medical supplies from reaching the facility. The PSA acknowledges the validity of socio-economic grievances raised by the community regarding housing and road infrastructure, but the disruption of healthcare services is unacceptable and puts lives at risk. The protests, which reportedly started on 17 February 2025, have led to the destruction of the main access road, isolating the Hospital. Medical personnel have been stranded for days, unable to rotate shifts, leading to staff exhaustion and a strain on service delivery. Patients requiring urgent medical attention have been unable to reach the facility, thereby endangering lives. Food and medical supplies are running critically low, as catering and delivery trucks cannot enter the Hospital grounds. Emergency services have also been affected, delaying ambulances, and putting critical patients at risk.

Hospitals and healthcare workers must be protected against all forms of protest action. The PSA calls for urgent government intervention to restore access to the Hospital and ensure the immediate resumption of healthcare services. The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, under the Premier, and the MEC for Health must take immediate steps to engage with stakeholders and resolve the crisis. The PSA further urges law enforcement agencies to act swiftly in securing the Hospital and allowing employees, patients, and emergency services to move freely without intimidation or obstruction.

Whilst the affected community has long-standing grievances regarding housing and road infrastructure, these issues must be addressed without compromising essential healthcare services. The PSA calls on the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health, the Department of Human Settlements, and the Department of Transport to engage in direct dialogue with the affected community to address concerns in a structured and sustainable manner. Government must also deploy a crisis management team to ensure the immediate provision of food, medical supplies, and other essentials to stranded employees and patients.

Public health institutions should never be used as bargaining tools in service delivery disputes. Healthcare workers are already overburdened owing to staff shortages, resource constraints, and budgetary limitations. Subjecting them to unsafe working conditions further erodes morale and threatens service delivery.

The PSA urges government to implement stronger governance mechanisms to prevent such incidents. These includes early warning systems to detect threats to public services, improved government-community communication to resolve grievances before these escalate, and long-term investment in infrastructure to address service delivery failures.

The PSA remains committed to advocating for the safety and well-being of healthcare workers and ensuring that government is held accountable for its service delivery obligations. The PSA urges the relevant authorities to act decisively and urgently to restore order, protect lives, and ensure that public healthcare services are not compromised. Failure to act swiftly will further erode public confidence in government's ability to provide essential services and uphold the rights of public servants and communities.

END