

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA condemns Free State Department of Education's failure to implement binding awards and pay salaries
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is outraged by the Free State Department of Education's persistent failure to implement final and binding arbitration awards and to pay salaries due to its employees, with some cases now spanning eight months of non-payment.

This blatant disregard for legal obligations and employee welfare has led to severe financial and emotional distress amongst affected employees. Despite final and binding arbitration awards, the Department repeatedly fails to comply with these awards.

This non-compliance includes the recent failure to pay certain employees their salaries, despite valid contracts of employment. It is distressing that the Department employs staff but does not remunerate them for up to eight months. This neglect places these employees in untenable positions, struggling to meet their basic living needs. Moreover, the Department has done nothing to address and resolve the grievances submitted by affected employees.

Despite numerous correspondence by the PSA and requests for intervention, the Department has shown a disturbing lack of responsiveness and accountability. For example, a PSA member's salary was unjustly stopped without finalisation of her ill-health retirement, plunging her into financial hardship and exacerbating her battle with depression. Despite repeated attempts to engage with the Department, including the MEC, no satisfactory action has been taken to resolve her matter. In another matter, a PSA member was awarded compensation and back pay totalling R235 826, along with reinstatement to his previous position following an unfair dismissal. The award was certified by the CCMA, making it equivalent to a court order. The Department failed to comply with the court order, leading to accrued interest and increasing the amount owed to R459 279, which is an additional R223 453 owing to the Department's inaction.

The Department's failure to comply with such awards prolongs the suffering of employees and drains taxpayers' money. The cost of accrued interest on amounts owed and expenses incurred in appointing legal services to defend indefensible matters is a gross misuse of public funds. This wasteful expenditure could have been avoided had the Department adhered to its legal obligations from the outset.

The PSA urges the Department to address these issues without delay to prevent further harm to affected employees and restore confidence in its commitment to fairness and justice. The PSA will continue to pursue all available legal avenues to ensure that the Union's members' rights are upheld

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