

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA condemns overcrowding in Limpopo schools
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is disturbed by reported overcrowding at two secondary schools in Musina in Limpopo where classes are catering for as many as 90 learners.

The area has only two secondary schools that do not require payment of school fees by learners, namely Musina and Renaissance High Schools, creating a huge burden on these schools. The economic situation forces many parents to take their children to these schools, which cannot absorb the learners from some five primary schools in Musina. An influx of foreigners from neighbouring countries further contributes to the problem with many of these learners arrive at these schools with a need of education.

Overcrowding not only affects learners but complicates the task of educators as efficient classroom management becomes impossible. The necessary learner support cannot be provided as it impossible for an educator to individual attention to 90 learners. It is not ideal for a classroom to have more than 35 learners. The Department of Basic Education's recommended ratio is 34 learners per educator. Having 90 learners in one classroom is more than double the recommended ratio and severely compromises the quality of education. In addition, the risk of spreading illnesses is high, making such overcrowded classrooms a health and safety risk. These educators are working in an environment that not safe or conducive and is a clear contravention of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

The overcrowding further results in longer turnaround time for marking exam papers and tests, thus demotivating learners. Individual engagement between learners and educators are compromised, resulting in challenges not being addressed and hampering improvement.

The PSA urges the Limpopo Department of Education to urgently provide furnished mobile classrooms to these schools and appoint temporary educators to assist these learners to salvage the academic year. Overcrowding is a major problem in Limpopo as most schools are not in compliance with the recommended teacher-learner ratio, which hampers the quality of education and the overall classroom experience. The children of Limpopo deserve better, and the Department must rise to the challenge of providing a conducive and safe learning environment, which is a right for these learners. Limpopo is not doing very well with infrastructure development and many schools have classroom shortages and no access to proper toilet facilities. Despite this, educators are not supported and are held responsible for poor academic results. The PSA is committed to protect the rights and well-being of public servants and the communities they serve. The PSA will continue to monitor the situation closely and push for the necessary changes to ensure that every child in Limpopo has access to quality education in a safe and supportive environment.

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