

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA discouraged by government's failure to eradicate pit latrines at schools and calls for resources and plan to address remaining 141 schools
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is discouraged by government's failure to meet the deadline for eradicating 141 unsafe pit latrines, as highlighted by the Minister of Basic Education.

This failure represents a significant lapse in the commitment to ensuring the safety and dignity of learners and educators. It further underscores a broader issue of accountability and effective governance. Despite repeated assurances and allocated resources, the continued existence of these hazardous pit latrines poses a severe risk to the health and well-being of particularly vulnerable children. The Department had committed to eradicate pit latrines at schools by 31 March 2025 as part of the Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) initiative. The Minister attributed the failure to meet the deadline to budgetary challenges, construction mafia, bad weather, and contractors who failed to do the work within the agreed time. The Minister also indicated that some private donors did not fulfil their commitments and therefore those donor projects will be transferred to provincial Education Departments to be completed without further delay.

The PSA previously called on government to create internal capacity through training and employment of its own artisans, which would ensure speedy completion of infrastructure projects at a fraction of the money paid to service providers. Building toilets cannot be a complex project that necessitates outsourcing. The issue of contractors who fail to do their job is not new to government. Historically, government has had poor implementation of project management and monitoring of contractors, therefore these challenges continue. Non-compliant contractors must be blacklisted and no longer be allowed to do any work for government owing to their demonstrated lack of professionalism and incompetence.

The Minister has indicated that the Department has set aside R175 million to assist with some of the delayed pit latrine projects across the country. The Minister, however, failed to commit on a deadline. The Minister is aware that the allocated funding is inadequate, which has been a problem throughout where government would allocate insufficient resources and hope for miracles whilst overly relying on donors. The Minister is urged to engage National Treasury to obtain more funding and also provide a clear and transparent plan to finally eradicate pit latrines at South African schools.

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