

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA Reacts: Draft Remote Work Policy**

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EMBARGO None

ENQUIRIES communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) representing more than 230 000 public servants, has been made aware of the Draft Remote Work Framework Policy tabled by Government at the end of 2021 in the Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) and recent media reports, which has raised alarms around the introduction of such a policy. The discussions and consultation process on this Framework was deferred to a Public Service Summit set for March 2022, however it does not deter labour from making inputs at this stage.

At the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the development of such a regulatory framework to manage how employees work from home became essential as employers failed to adhere to working hours and how, amongst others, leave and sick leave are being regulated. Covid-19 brought a lot of challenges and changes in the workplace and our laws still need to be adapted and be developed to embrace and regulate it. The world was already in the 4th Industrial Revolution and realised that workplace changes was inevitable. The epidemic has merely quickened the process. Transformation in the workplace is always inevitable and the role of a Trade Union during such transformations is key for the sake of our economy and mainly for the protection of workers during in times like these. This has always been the purpose of the PSA in its existence of more than 100 years where the Union has stood by its members through the various workplace changes and challenges. The PSA believes its experience and history of services rendered to its members for the past 100 years during these transformation processes, should bring confidence to its members and all 1,3 million public servants that their rights will be protected, and their interests advanced at any opportunity.

With the challenges brought by the epidemic workplace, it has also brought tremendous opportunities for both the employer and employee, and it should be embraced. Opportunities, such as the ability of a women to work from home, more effectively, whilst ensuring that they are able to breastfeed their infants for as long as possible as most workplaces lack such facilities, savings on childcare expenses and the flexibility it provides with work opportunities. Employees can work from anywhere and they do not have to relocate to overcrowded cities, where they will be severely affected by petrol price increases and can make savings on personal expenditure such as transport cost and time spent in traffic. Relocation costs and disruption of home security when one partner/spouse is transferred in the workplace, can be addressed. Employers will also experience savings on daily operational expenditure, travelling expenditure, electricity use, paper, stationary amongst other costs. Funds which can be re-directed to basic service delivery and proper salary increases and benefits for workers. More employees can be appointed in areas which already require more manpower. The list of benefits has become endless, and some initial indications already show that most workplaces reported an increase in efficiencies and productivity with employees working from home.

However, the PSA is also not ignorant to the pitfalls of the process, including empty buildings and canteens, *etc*, which can contribute to job losses. The Country's economy unfortunately cannot not afford such pitfalls at this stage. The introduction and development of such a policy cannot and should never be at the expense of workers and the PSA will ensure that it guards against it. The PSA is carefully studying the policy to ensure that space is not created with the implementation of such a policy to contribute to redundancies and job losses and is set to participate in such discussions and debates at the Summit.

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