

<b>MEDIA RELEASE</b>	PSA warns of looming humanitarian disaster at Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital, KwaZulu-Natal
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is outraged by the ongoing and catastrophic failure to restore the water supply to Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital in KwaZulu-Natal.

The continued collapse of basic services at this critical healthcare facility is an unforgivable act of negligence and a direct threat to public health, human dignity, and workplace safety. The prolonged water outage has had devastating consequences, endangering patients, and healthcare workers. Life-saving procedures have been disrupted, critical medical treatments, including surgeries, wound care, and infection control measures, have been severely compromised. Patients requiring emergency care face life-threatening delays. The chances of disease outbreaks soared whilst the absence of running water has crippled sanitation efforts, increasing the likelihood of infections and respiratory illnesses. Neonatal, ICU, immune-compromised, and post-operative patients are particularly at risk. There is a breakdown of hygiene and infection control, toilets are overflowing, wards are unsanitary, and healthcare workers are unable to wash their hands properly, violating infection prevention protocols.

The hospital is now a breeding ground for disease, endangering staff, and patients. With no water for sterilisation, medical equipment cannot be thoroughly cleaned, forcing staff to operate under dangerous and substandard conditions. Laboratories and diagnostic services have been severely affected, delaying critical test results and proper patient management. Patients, including pregnant women, newborns, and the elderly, are forced to endure inhumane conditions. Denying access to basic water is a violation of constitutional rights, including the right to dignity, healthcare, and a safe working environment.

The PSA categorically condemns this shocking dereliction of duty by the provincial Department of Health and its leadership. This situation is a direct breach of multiple laws and policies, including, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. Employers must provide a workplace that does not expose employees to health hazards. The lack of water has turned the Hospital into a death trap. The *National Health Act*, section 27 of the *Constitution* demands that “every citizen has the right to access healthcare services”. The Provincial Government is failing in its legal mandate to provide basic healthcare services in KwaZulu-Natal, as instructed by the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act* and the *Labour Relations Act*.

Given the critical nature of this crisis, the PSA demands urgent and decisive intervention by the Provincial and National Government. The PSA calls for the immediate restoration of water supply within 48 hours, with a publicly available timeline for full-service resumption.

Emergency water tankers must be deployed and alternative water supply solutions, including boreholes and high-capacity storage tanks, must be in place to prevent further service interruptions. An independent investigation into the causes of this failure, with severe disciplinary action against those responsible for this gross mismanagement is required. The PSA further calls for an urgent meeting with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health and Provincial Government to present a concrete long-term infrastructure plan to prevent such failures at all healthcare facilities.

The PSA has formally communicated these demands to the relevant authorities and has issued a 48-hour ultimatum for immediate action. Should government fail to restore the water supply and implement a clear resolution plan, the PSA will escalate this matter through legal action against the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health for failing in its statutory obligations. The PSA will also not hesitate to file a complaint with the South African Human Rights Commission and the Public Protector to investigate this gross violation of public health and human rights.

This shameful crisis reflects the incompetence and failure of those tasked with governing and maintaining essential healthcare services. The PSA will not allow public servants and patients to suffer owing to bureaucratic negligence and political indifference. The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government has a final opportunity to correct this disastrous failure. Should it fail to act, it will be held accountable for the consequences of this incompetence, including the deaths and suffering of patients and healthcare workers.

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