

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA welcomes proposed labour law amendments but calls for stronger worker protection**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) has taken note of proposed amendments to labour laws tabled at the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC).

The PSA supports these amendments, which aim to enhance worker protections and strengthen fair labour practices in South Africa. The PSA calls for robust implementation to ensure these laws effectively safeguard workers, particularly vulnerable groups. The proposal to increase severance packages from one week's remuneration per year of service to two weeks is welcomed. This is a crucial step in providing workers with greater financial security during retrenchments, especially in the face of economic uncertainty. This will mitigate the devastating impact of job losses, especially in sectors that have been impacted by restructuring and economic downturns.

The proposal to limit the validity of Section 77 strike certificates under the *Labour Relations Act* to 12 months is a concern. The PSA acknowledges the need for structure in strike actions, but this limitation could unfairly restrict workers' right to strike over unresolved socio-economic issues. A careful review of this provision is required to ensure that workers are not deprived of their right to protest against issues that may take longer than a year to resolve.

The PSA strongly supports the amendment that employers will no longer be allowed to include the payment of benefits as part of the minimum wage. This is a victory for workers, ensuring that the minimum wage reflects actual income and does not include non-cash benefits such as accommodation or food. It will assist in addressing loopholes that allow employers to underpay workers and ensuring a fair and transparent wage structure.

The proposed protection of shift workers from discrimination is a much-needed change. Requiring employers to allocate shifts equally will prevent exploitation of workers in industries that rely on shift work. This will promote fairness and equality, particularly for workers in sectors such as healthcare, security, and manufacturing who often face unfair shift allocations that disrupt their work-life balance.

The PSA applauds the intended recognition of atypical workers, such as actors and artists, in collective bargaining processes. The nature of their work leaves them vulnerable to exploitation, with limited job security and benefits. Including these workers in collective bargaining will empower them to negotiate better terms and conditions, aligning their rights with those of more traditional employees.

The PSA noted proposed changes related to unfair dismissal for high-paid employees and will seek further clarity on how these amendments will be applied. Whilst the PSA supports measures that protect all employees from



unfair dismissal, it is crucial that changes ensure equal protection for workers at all income levels, without creating loopholes for employers to dismiss employees without due process.

The PSA commends these progressive proposals to amend current labour laws, but stresses that enforcement and monitoring will be critical in ensuring these changes translate into real benefits for workers. The PSA urges NEDLAC to ensure that the voice of labour is central in finalising these amendments. Government is further urged to ensure swift and effective implementation to enhance fairness and equity in the workplace.

The PSA is committed to advocating for the rights of public servants and all workers in South Africa. The Union will continue to monitor developments closely to ensure that these result in meaningful change.

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