

Update: Public Service wage negotiations 2021/22- financial year – PSA to sign “interim” wage agreement

As previously reported, members will recall that the PSA was presented with the final wage offer from the employer on 6 July 2021. This offer was presented to members who were requested to either accept or reject the offer in the form of an electronic mandating process. It must be noted that the revised offer is regarded as a “stop-gap measure” to alleviate financial pressure on public servants. Clause 3.3 of the agreement provides that the cash allowance will remain in force until a new agreement is reached, indicating that the agreement does not respond to workers’ demands and is regarded as a “temporary” measure in the absence of no agreement being reached on tabled salary demands.

Salary negotiations in the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) commenced on 1 March 2021, for the yearly increases that are due on 1 April. This process had all public servants in anticipation of the outcome of this year’s negotiations. They were aware of the difficult circumstances as the same employer who made this offer, did not honour the previous year’s agreement (PSCBC Resolution 1/2018). That matter will be heard at the Constitutional Court on 24 August 2021.

Against this backdrop, the PSA approached this year’s negotiations with a great deal of mistrust and difficulty. Initially, the PSA could not present members with any form of proposal or offer from the employer and the 0% offer presented by the employer left the PSA with no option but to declare a dispute. In the interim, the rest of the unions continued negotiating with the employer in a facilitation process. The PSA, in terms of its initial demand for members, continued to apply pressure for a better offer. The PSA went through the dispute resolution processes of Council and was, to a certain extent sidelined, and at no point throughout the process was presented with any revised offer.

After conciliation failed, the PSA balloted members to vote in favour of a strike or not. After having received a mandate to embark on strike action, the PSA was about to serve its notice of strike action when a PSCBC meeting was convened on 6 July 2021. This strike was intended to speak on behalf of members to apply pressure on the employer to hear their pleas as members remained at the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic. The PSA demanded at least a salary adjustment for members to sustain themselves and those who depend on them for their livelihood.

In the interim the PSA, its leadership and members have witnessed how the country and the economy are declining. It has seen the impact of the pandemic, the looting, the looting of state coffers through corruption and the sudden, sharp rise in inflation and price increases in food and related products. The PSA is concerned about the country's wellbeing and the impact it has on members who have not received an increase for two years. The PSA wants to assist in uplifting the economy and for South Africa not to suffer the same fate as neighbouring countries are experiencing. The PSA still maintains that government is taking far too long to recover the money that was stolen from citizens through corruption and that public servants should not pay for the sins of others. The PSA will continue its efforts, with the support of other unions, to restore the integrity of the country and its Public Service. On this basis, the PSA on behalf of its members and the mandate received from members, will accept the employer's interim offer with the expectation that its standing demands will be taken forward through negotiations in the PSCBC.

The PSA would like to thank members for their participation in this process. It is anticipated that in accepting this offer, the PSA and its members can play a key role in restoring the country's economy.

GENERAL MANAGER