



FOR PSA MEMBERS: KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

12-03-2025

Feedback: Charles Johnson Memorial (Nqutu) Hospital: Institutional Management and Labour Committee (IMLC) Meeting - 21 February 2025

The following items were discussed:

Rationalisation and reclassification of Nondweni Clinic operating hours

The employer reported in the meeting that although the said Clinic is operating for 24 hours, Head Office identified this Clinic as one which is not operating optimally during the night. Organised labour raised serious concerns as they were not part of the process of assessing the performance of the Clinic, which has the potential to adversely affect members who might be transferred to other institutions. Management failed to provide answers regarding how far the performance evaluation process is and subsequently the PSA and other unions will embark on a fact-finding mission to engage all staff of Nondweni Clinic to establish if consultation had taken place as purported by management. After these consultations, further engagements will be undertaken with KZN Health Head Office.

Recognition status: PSA and NPSWU

The employer also sponsored this item to seek clarity on membership and recognition in the IMLC of the two unions. This issue was deferred to the next meeting of the IMLC where relevant documentation will be provided pertaining to the working-together relationship between the two unions.

Implementation of housing policy

Organised labour was very concerned about the implementation of this policy where members residing at the institution's residences are paying R200 per month for water they do not utilise as taps have been dry for years. Another concern is the allocation of four midwifery students to share one room but required to pay R900 rental each, which is viewed by organised labour as a sheer exploitation. Unfortunately, management could not provide satisfactory answers. Members are advised to lodge grievances. The matter will also be escalated to the relevant Chamber for further deliberations.

Poor management of patients

It was reported that impoverished patients from the town of Nquthu and surroundings need lifesaving treatment such as chemotherapy and other specialist treatment at tertiary/quaternary hospitals such as Greys and Inkosi Albert Luthuli Hospital. These patients are missing their appointments almost on a daily basis owing to the unavailability of ambulances to transport them. Management tried to explain the challenges that it is facing regarding these patients missing their appointments as it takes about six months to get appointments and unfortunately some patients miss appointments for treatment for good. This matter will be escalated to the Head of Department for further attention.

Medication shortage

Nqutu Hospital has not been left unscathed by current medication shortages affecting hospitals in KwaZulu-Natal. Although management tried to downplay the extent of the problem at the Hospital, organised labour was adamant that patients are sent home without medication after consultations with doctors where they are promised to be called to come back for collections, but this does not happen. This matter will also be escalated to the Head of Department for further attention.

Wearing of union regalia

It was reported that management is threatening and intimidating members of unions for wearing union regalia since it is according to it prohibited in terms of the policy of Workplace Orientation where it refers to the wearing of regalia with slogans. Organised labour vehemently disputed management's understanding of regalia with slogans as union regalia is unlike political parties' regalia, which usually shows slogans. Management was advised to do research on this subject as it has prematurely threatened to charge members for wearing unions' regalia, which organised labour views as an act of provocation where a Labour Court judgement (*Numsa obo members v Transnet Soc Ltd JS427/5 [2018]*) ruled that employees have the right to wear union regalia at the workplace. This matter is currently under discussion at the Provincial Chamber and the outcome is awaited.

Filling of critical posts

Organised labour wanted to know when critical posts will be filled in the Hospital as many employees are acting in senior management positions, which is causing frustration and instability. An example was made for one manager acting in three critical positions of HRM, HRD, and Labour Relations. Management referred to Circular 1/2025 that has placed a moratorium in the filling of posts in the Department.

Allocation of General Orderlies

There have been unilateral changes made in the terms and conditions of employment for General Orderlies (GOs) in the institution where an illegal 12x2 shift system has been introduced without consultation with labour organisations. The PSA requested a bilateral meeting with the CEO as early as 3 February 2025 well before the IMLC meeting and unfortunately this important point was deferred to the next special IMLC meeting on 6 March 2025. This was done without discussing it with organised labour as management had other pressing issues to address. This was loathed by organised labour as it had on numerous occasions failed to get management to attend IMLC meetings. Management was urged to put implementation of these unlawful changes in abeyance but the next day, on Friday, 21 February 2025, an unknown person to organised labour organisations, continued to threaten GOs to comply with this unlawful shift and allocation to labour's dismay of the institution's management arrogance and undermining of lawful processes. The PSA will not allow the unilateral changes to the terms and

conditions of employment for GOs until this matter has been discussed during the IMLC meeting on 6 March 2025 and the said person has been warned to stop threatening members.

Most of the challenges experienced in the institution show management's disdainful disregard of labour organisations in the significant role as stakeholders in ensuring labour stability and peace. The PSA will, however, keep on challenging management on unfair conduct since it is the PSA's responsibility to protect members' rights and promote their interests.

For more information, contact Welcome Ngcobo on 033 392 7619. Employees who want to join the PSA can contact Zweli Msane on Zweli.Msane@psa.co.za. Make the PSA your labour Union. Join the PSA today!

Reuben Maleka
GENERAL MANAGER