

Feedback: Special Departmental Bargaining Chamber meeting – 4 December 2023

Section 32 of *Public Service Act*

The employer reported that management had a meeting on 27 November 2023, and resolved to invoke section 32 of the *Public Service Act*, which reads as follows: *“Assignment of other functions to officers and employees, - An executive authority or the head of a department, branch, office, or institution may direct any officer or employee under his or her control temporarily to perform duties other than those ordinarily assigned to such an officer or employee or appropriate to the grade, designated or classification of his or her post, and he or she shall comply with such direction”*.

The reason for management to give this concept a go-ahead is because the Department is currently understaffed, which results in most employees being under pressure to deliver. It further indicated that the Department has 67 vacant posts, which could not be filled after National Treasury issued a circular for cost-containment measures and the fact that the Department does not have sufficient funds.

The PSA questioned the employer about whether employees who will be seconded will be reimbursed and who will be performing their tasks when they are reassigned to new roles. The employer responded that no employees will be remunerated when they are reassigned to new roles and that branch managers will allocate their functions to employees who are not busy at the time and, in some cases, managers must perform those functions. The PSA raised a concern that this process could potentially exploit employees. It further emphasised that the process of reassigning employees to do other functions is not a solution because the portfolios of those who will be reassigned will also suffer. The employer committed to going back to its principals to submit concerns raised by labour. Feedback will be provided in the next meeting.

Reasonable accommodation guideline for employees’ emergencies and special cases

The employer tabled the guideline on accommodation for employees’ emergencies and special cases. It reported that it seeks to address emergencies and special employee cases that are not covered in any of the departmental policies or guidelines. This is to ensure a uniform approach to requests from employees to work from home owing to emergencies.

The PSA indicated that the guideline may only focus on working from home as the department does not have a policy regulating such. It further indicated that the General Public Service Sectoral Bargaining Council (GPSSBC) is in the process of developing special leave for the improvement of conditions of service and requested that the Department should wait until such a process is concluded. The employer welcomed the proposal from the PSA.

Draft Retention and Succession Planning Implementation Guidelines 2023/2026

The employer tabled the draft Retention and Succession Planning guidelines. It reported that the purpose of the Retention and Succession Plan is to guide the implementation of the Retention and Succession Planning Policy of the Department. The plan was designed to, amongst others, proactively identify, develop, and prepare internal roles, ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of the Department. It reported that the plan further endeavours to create and maintain a conducive environment that ensures the supply and retention of experienced, highly skilled, and qualified employees. The PSA questioned the employer on the rationale behind formulating this guideline. The employer responded that this guideline is meant to complement the departmental Retention and Succession Planning Policy. Parties resolved to defer the matter to the task team for further deliberations. Members are requested to peruse the guideline and provide inputs to dumo@gcis.gov.za by **no later than 12 December 2023**.

Members will be informed of developments.

Employees who want to join the PSA can visit the PSA's website (www.psa.co.za), send an email to ask@psa.co.za, or contact PSA Provincial Offices.

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GENERAL MANAGER