



NPSWU CALLS FOR ACTION ON PUBLIC SECTOR JOBS AND WORKING CONDITIONS FOLLOWING SONA 2026

PRESS STATEMENT - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday February 13, 2026

The National Public Service Workers' Union (NPSWU) notes the commitments made by President Cyril Ramaphosa during the 2026 State of the Nation Address.

While we welcome the government's stated intention to improve service delivery and create employment opportunities, NPSWU stresses that the lived reality of public service workers tells a different story.

Public hospitals and clinics across the country continue to face severe staff shortages. Nurses, EMS personnel, CHWs and frontline workers are stretched beyond safe limits, compromising both worker wellbeing and patient care. Service delivery cannot improve without urgent investment in permanent staffing.

NPSWU is concerned that temporary employment programmes are repeatedly presented as job creation. Short-term contracts cannot sustain families or build long-term economic security. South Africa needs permanent, pensionable jobs, particularly for young people entering the labour market.

Despite the employment targets outlined in SONA, national unemployment and youth unemployment especially for graduates remain at crisis levels. The scale of the problem shows that we still have a long road ahead before meaningful economic inclusion is achieved.

We further highlight the unacceptable working conditions faced by many public servants. In some facilities workers lack basic tools such as computers and desks, are forced to use personal phones for official duties, and operate in overcrowded wards where patients do not have enough beds. These systemic failures are unfairly carried by workers who continue to serve communities under impossible conditions.

A capable state cannot exist without supported workers. Investment in infrastructure must be matched by investment in the people delivering public services every day. NPSWU calls on government to prioritise permanent job creation, address staffing shortages in the health sector, and urgently improve working conditions across public institutions.

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