

Media Statement by KZN Health MEC. Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the disruption of the forensic pathology services in KwaZulu-Natal

09 April 2014

For immediate release

The Department of Health in KwaZulu-Natal wishes to apologise to all the community members who have been inconvenienced by the illegal industrial action that has disrupted the smooth running of its Forensic Pathology Services since April 7, 2014.

As a Department we have now put measures in place to ensure that bereaved families are able to bury their loved ones as per schedule.

It is imperative that we state that Health Forensic Pathology Service is an essential service as defined in the Labour Relations Act. We have thus given all those partaking in this illegal action an ultimatum that they must return to work failing which they will face disciplinary action.

All the issues that form basis for this illegal industrial action, we must state that they are Human Resource related and to our understanding; they have been discussed with all the unions in the sector; i.e:

- Monthly deductions for the Community Care Givers' pertaining to their subscriptions to unions were addressed at the Chamber as this is a transversal matter. The resolution in this regard was reached at the meeting in March 2014 with unions expected to send applications for deductions from their members to the Department for processing on the PERSAL system.
- The issue regarding translation and improvement of employees from Level 4 salary to Level 5 has also been considered and progress in this matter is well advanced.
- The issue of the Forensic Pathology Service organisational structure was also discussed at the Chamber and agreed to that implementation will commence in the 2014/15 financial year when funds become available.
- With regard to the back pay, there was a commitment by the Department to make a once-off payment dating back to 1st April 2010. This was duly done and was also communicated by way of a circular to all the affected employees in April 2011.

Again we reiterate that the disruptions to the service are illegal and have no basis at all.

As means to ensure that services are made available, we have thus put contingency plans in place by enlisting the assistance of the South African Police Services, through the Office of the Provincial Commissioner, to be available for the collection and transportation of bodies from crime and accident scenes. The Department's Forensic Pathology Mortuary Service vehicles have been made available for this purpose.

The affected Districts have also been mandated to make use of the existing arrangements with the private sector by utilizing Private Funeral Parlours for storage as means to minimize inconveniences to the bereaved.

In compliance with the prescripts of the law; a court interdict has been applied for to prevent workers from continuing with their illegal action and to stop them from interfering with those that are at work.

To ensure minimum inconvenience to all the bereaved families and community members we have also set up a Help Desk where problems can be reported; the number is: 0800 005 133 alternatively; 033 395 3046.