

MEDIA STATEMENT
19 October 2016

KZN Health MEC resolves the Gale Street Medico-Legal Mortuary strike

KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, has announced that community members who want to identify or collect the bodies of their diseased relatives at Gale Street Medico-Legal Mortuary may now do so without hindrance.

This follows his early morning meeting [October 19] with the workers who had for the past two days embarked on a strike. The entire workforce downed tools because their manager who had been on suspension resumed her duties on Monday, October 17. The MEC decided to get involved after receiving complaints from relatives indicating that the strike was bound to affect the post – mortem and burial schedules.

MEC Dhlomo informed the workers that he has not been told that matters pertaining to the manager's suspension have been concluded. About the manager's conduct, he cited an incident where he had to personally intervene when employees at the facility, under the Manager's guidance, had refused to assist a family that had earlier identified and took the wrong corpse for burial. The MEC explained that he learnt of the family's plight after they had gone with the corpse to the SABC studios saying that they do not know what to do with it.

In calling for her suspension then, MEC Dhlomo had said:

“We really cannot keep a person without empathy in such a sensitive environment. Here we need people who will appreciate that even the departed have a right to dignity. We simply cannot keep a manager who fails to show leadership and cannot take decisive action to resolve challenges.”

In meeting with the workforce, the MEC was also told of other grievances that included issues of overtime and complains about inadequate supply of protective clothing. For these, the MEC undertook to get the Department's administration to urgently attend to them as they are bound to affect both the morale of the workforce as well as service delivery.

Ironically, as MEC Dhlomo was leaving the mortuary, having been assured by the workforce that they would resume their duties, the said manager arrived at the facility's gates. She was met by the MEC who told her that she must remain at home until she produces a letter that says her suspension has been reversed.

This afternoon the MEC has a meeting with the Head of Department and other Senior Managers to deal with all other issues affecting workers at the Gale Street [Magwaza Maphalala] mortuary.