

EPWP contract workers demand full employment

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Precious Gumede

EPWP workers picket outside the Ray Nkonyeni Municipality. PHOTO: precious gumede

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EXPANDED Public Works Programme (EPWP) workers at the Ray Nkonyeni Municipality who claim to have been in the programme since 2014, and whose contracts expired at the end of April, marched to the municipality in Port Shepstone on Tuesday demanding to speak to mayor Nomusa Mqwebu.

The EPWP workers said on Tuesday that it was the seventh day they had gone to the municipal offices to see the mayor, however, they were told she was not available.

The workers are responsible for tasks such as sweeping the streets, picking up litter, cutting vegetation and at times assisting municipal workers at sites.

One of the workers said she and others are sometimes asked to drive municipal trucks and when pay day arrives, they only get paid R1 100 a month. She said they feel the municipality has been “using them” and they demand permanent employment as there are rumours that the municipality is recruiting general workers.

“We heard that the municipality will be employing people on July 1,” she said.

The EPWP workers said that when they were taken into the programme they were told that the municipality would be training them, equipping them with skills so that they would be employable, however, no training was given to them.

Mqwebu then arrived and addressed the frustrated crowd about their issues. She then explained how the EPWP programmes work, emphasising that there was no agreement of permanent employment once their contracts ended.

“As far as I know, the EPWP programme takes a number of people who are unemployed, gives them temporary jobs for a year, and when the year is over a new intake of people are recruited. I was not aware that people have been employed since 2014,” said Mqwebu.

Municipal manager Max Mbili further explained to the EPWP workers that the new intake is now being recruited and also confirmed the general worker vacancies, for which he said the EPWP staff can apply.

“As the municipality, we cannot guarantee all our EPWP workers permanent employment, however, we know the stress of having to go home with no income.

“The only advice we can give is for all of you to apply for the available vacancies and hopefully some of you might get the vacant positions.

“In terms of training and skills development, the municipality never signed any agreement to train EPWPs. If we go back to all your contracts, it stated nothing about the municipality has training you,” said Mbili.