

Union demands minimum wage for government employees

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STAFF REPORTER

THE SOUTH African Liberated Public Sector Workers Union (Salipswu) has demanded the immediate implementation of the minimum wage of R3 500 for all government employees.

Salipswu provincial organiser, Thapelo Thole, said in a statement issued yesterday that at the end of this month some workers would still be earning less than the R3 500 minimum wage.

“We have members in government institutions, like Social Development, who are employed as community health care workers and have been working for between 10 to 15 years, who are still receiving stipends of R1 965.”

He pointed out that President Cyril Ramaphosa had instructed that from the first of this month the minimum wage would come into effect.

“Despite this there are members employed by various government departments, like Education, who are not being paid the minimum wage.

“As Salipswu we demand that all our workers must be paid the minimum wage as agreed by national. If the provincial government fails to pay the minimum wage, employers in the private sector will do the same as the government is failing to put into practice what it preaches.”

He acknowledged the MEC for Health, Fufe Makatong, for implementing the minimum wage for community health care workers and backdating the payments.

“We request that the same policy is adopted by Social Development as the community health care workers do the same work as those employed by the Department of Health. They also collect medication and some even attend the same training.”

He added that there were EPWP workers within the Department of Health who were cleaners at the clinics. “They are doing very good work in

keeping our clinics clean but they are still receiving a stipend of R2 500.

“In the same light, there are EPWP workers in the municipality who are also getting R1 999 a month. These workers wake up early in the morning and start working at 6am in the hot sun but they are still receiving R1 999. Most of them are not covered by the minimum wage as they are referred to as volunteers. We reject this term volunteers - these workers are not volunteers, they just have a weak understanding of their rights as workers.”

Thole stated that the union was demanding that all government departments immediately implemented the minimum wages.

Mobilise

“We are ready to move around the Province and mobilise our members to stand up and let their voices be heard.”

He added that a meeting of all community health care workers employed by the Department of Social Development would be held today at the Galeshewe Arena, where a way forward would be discussed. “We need to decide how to address this problem and the challenges facing the workers.”

The Minimum Wage Act, which sets an hourly rate of R20, came into effect on January 1.

According to the chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Labour, Lemias Mashile, the national minimum wage excludes farm workers, domestic workers and workers employed in an Expanded Public Works Programme who are entitled to an hourly rate of R18, R15 and R11 respectively.

“The National Minimum Wage Commission will come up with a proposal for these categories to increase these salaries within two years,” Mashile said.