



Publication: Witness, The - Main

Title: Workers demand EPWP employees be absorbed into permanent posts

Publish date: 06 Jun 2023

Page: 3

Reach: 6180

AVE: R 56368.62

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Workers demand EPWP employees be absorbed into permanent posts

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The National Public Services and Allied Workers Union (Nupsaw) members have threatened to bring everything to a standstill if their issues are not addressed by the Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal.

Yesterday, members who are affiliated with Saftu (South African Federation of Trade Unions) marched to the Department of Education offices on Berg Street in Pietermaritzburg, where they submitted their memorandum of demands.

They are demanding all the positions of all expanded public works programme (EPWP) employees, which includes security guards, clerks and cleaners, be absorbed into permanent posts, as well as provision of a guardroom and shelter rooms for school safety officers, tools of trade, special storage for personal belongings and rest rooms to use during meal breaks and rest periods.

They are also demanding overtime payment and uniforms that are in the line with the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), instead of their wearing their personal clothes.

Nupsaw provincial chairperson Bheki Mkhulise said they decided to march because they are tired of talking and raising their issues, which always fall on deaf ears.

Mkhulise said they have noted with great concern that the Education Department is mainly relying on EPWP employees to run operations which fall under job duties that should be performed by permanent employees.

"There are people who have been working for the department for over 10 years but they are earning R2 300.

"These are the mothers and fathers, who are expected to [provide for their families] on stipend.

"What made us angrier is that a department official went on one of the radio stations and claimed that



Members of Nupsaw during their march in Pietermaritzburg yesterday. **PHOTO: LETHIWE MAKHANYA**

they are getting paid R3 500, which is not true.

"This is not right. The department needs to absorb them. If not, they must at least be given a minimum wage," he said.

Mkhulise said it is time for the department to take action and attend to these issues or they will bring everything to a standstill.

"We have been patient enough with the department.

"We are giving them seven days to respond.

"We cannot have employees who do not even have privacy during their lunch breaks and security guards that do not even have guardhouses."

The memorandum was accepted by Vincent Myeni, the head of ministry, who promised that he will pass it on to the relevant people.

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