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IMPROVED CONDITIONS

Workers demand better wages and conditions in Pretoria march

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WORKERS from the government-sponsored Community Workers Programme (CWP) marched to the Department of Public Works in Pretoria yesterday, demanding permanent jobs, better wages and improved conditions.

Led by the Maanda Ashu Workers Union (Mawusa), workers gathered at the Old bus depot in Marabastad, then marched to the department's head office on Madiba Street to deliver their memorandum of grievances.

Part of the memorandum highlighted that contracts of 3 200 workers were terminated unlawfully and that workers are paid less than the agreed amount.

Cedric Chauke, national organiser of Mawusa, said workers also complained that they have been denied tools of trade for the past three years.

He explained that, under the occupational health and safety law, if workers lack the required tools and personal protective equipment (PPE) they can still sign in, clock on and wait for the material.

Chauke said: "There are workers that are owed by the government due to technical errors in their payment system. There are some months where workers don't get their stipends at all. The government is quiet on that issue."

He expressed concern that workers are signing contracts for R3 700 but they are only receiving R1 900 per month, "which means the rest of the money goes to the middle man".

He slammed the government's "arrogant, non-caring" stance on the CWP, saying: "We have been engaging for 15 years, yet we work for the state but get no benefits. You need at least R1 800 for food, but they still underpay us."

Deputy director-general Adam Mthombeni, who received the memorandum, promised to respond to workers' issues within seven days.

"We will study their memorandum and we would respond to their issues around the plight of the workers," he said.