

## **MEDIA STATEMENT-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thursday April 13, 2017

### **NEHAWU SIGNS DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRIKE SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT AND SUSPENDS THE STRIKE**

The National Education Health & Allied Workers' Union [NEHAWU] has signed a settlement agreement with the Department of Social Development. The agreement was signed on Wednesday April 12, 2017 after lengthy and difficult marathon negotiations.

NEHAWU has since suspended the strike which has lasted more than five weeks. However, we still need to conclude negotiations in the Bargaining Council in relation to the details of both the Rural Allowance and the Review of Occupational Specific Dispensation [OSD]. When these matters are eventually finalised at the Bargaining Council, we will then call off the strike permanently. Workers are expected to return to work on Friday April 14, 2017 for those who work shifts and other employees will return on Tuesday April 18, 2017.

A task team consisting of both NEHAWU and the employer is established to monitor the implementation of the agreement and ensure swift resolution of challenges which may arise. Both NEHAWU and the employer agreed that there will be cessation of hostilities and that no worker will be a victim of punitive measures by the employer for participating in the strike. The Department also made a commitment to reverse all deductions that have already been effected on some workers.

The settlement is a victory for workers in that:

- The employer agreed in principle and committed to review OSD including salary levels of all Social Service Professionals and Occupations and to the introduction of Rural Allowance. In this regard, the employer committed to table a detailed offer and proposals on the demands above on or before 31<sup>st</sup> July 2017 in the Bargaining Council.
- Back pay on the introduction of Rural Allowance will be with effect from 01<sup>st</sup> April 2017.
- Back pay on reviewed and improved salary levels and other inherent benefits of a packaged OSD model will be with effect from 01 October 2017.
- The strike has ensured that NEHAWU members in the Social Development Sector are more united than ever before.
- The public in large is aware of the plight of poor conditions of service of all workers in the Social Development Sector and they supported and still support our campaign.

- The Minister of Social Development conceded that all the issues NEHAWU is striking for is a reality and committed her department to address these issues.

As NEHAWU, we are elated that we have been able to fight and win these gains for workers even though the employer was hell-bent on maintaining the status quo. This hard won victory is as a result of the hard work put in by the national union since August 2015. The strike which came after we marched to the Department of Social Development and the Department of Public Service and Administration on February 10, 2017 was marred by delaying tactics by the department through court interdicts and police high handedness on our members in picket lines.

Our members remained discipline and resolute in picket lines as they were struggling for a living wage and better working conditions. We commend our members for the resilience they displayed during the strike even when the department was unwavering in their desire to play hide and seek with us. The national union will ensure that the unity brought forth by the strike in this sector remains intact going forward.

This strike should serve as a lesson that workers should never be taken for granted and that any attempt to treat them with disrespect shall be met with militancy. NEHAWU will continue to mobilise workers against any abuse by employers and ensure that they are treated with both respect and dignity. NEHAWU further appreciate the support shown by the public at large during these difficult times.

#### **Issued by NEHAWU Secretariat**

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