

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

### **NEHAWU CURRENTLY PREPARING FOR A STRIKE AT NSFAS**

Wednesday January 10, 2018

The National Education Health & Allied Workers' Union [NEHAWU] is currently preparing for a strike at the National Financial Aid Scheme [NSFAS]. This looming strike is as a result of the failed negotiations in the Bargaining Council between the employer and NEHAWU.

The reasonable demands to the employer are as follows:

- Review of CTC salary structure for Level 1 – 12;
- Medical Aid cover subsidy to extend to parents of the NSFAS employees, and of which the employer must pay 100% of such costs;
- Full-Time employment of workers who are currently on fixed term contracts;
- Review of Organisational Rights agreement to allow representation of workers to extend beyond internal Shop Stewards; cater for Full Time Shop Steward, and Agency Fee Agreement;
- Elevation of lowest paid cleaners from level 2 to level 3; and
- Finalization of Job Evaluations process so as to correct the incorrect tendency of workers paid at lower levels as from 2015.

All these demands were submitted to the employer at a bargain council meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2017 and at another bargain council meeting which sat on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017. Both meetings turned out to be fruitless exercises, with no hope for a favourable end in sight. In the last meeting the employer was unprepared and demanded more clarity on the demands that the union submitted. Subsequent meetings failed to sit because the employer was being evasive and refused to meet the union to resolve the impasse.

Efforts by the national union to try meet the management has been in vain. Formal communication has been made with the management with the hope that they will eventually meet us to resolve the deadlock but to our dismay they continued to play hide and seek. Later, the employer elected to change their negotiating team and that led to us declaring a dispute with the CCMA because we see this as nothing but another delaying tactic. The national union is currently in the process of preparing for a full blown strike.

The union further notes the recently announced decision by NSFAS to centralize their application system, purportedly to make applying for funding much easier for eligible students as they will be applying in one central place. However, the national union believes that this will have serious impact on the livelihoods of the staff employed in financial aid offices in universities and TVET colleges as they will end up being deemed surplus to requirements due to poor migration functions hence as a union we call for their permanent absorption by NSFAS. As NEHAWU, we reject any

extra workload that will be assigned to the current NSFAS staff based at the Wynberg Offices as a result of poor planning by the NSFAS management.

The intransigency of the employer has left us with no option but to go on a strike action to compel the employer to concede to our demands. A strike action is usually the last option to be taken by the union after exhausting all other avenues available to us. This is a very unfortunate and painful decision to take considering that it might affect working class and poor students who has to apply at NSFAS for funding for the 2018 academic year.

Every employer has an obligation to take care of its most important assets which is its human resources. NSFAS is no exception and they also have a responsibility to ensure that they listen to the demands of workers because failure to do so ultimately leads to unnecessary strikes. We hope the employer will put measures in place to avert the strike as it might have dire consequences for the working and the poor.

Issued by NEHAWU Secretariat

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