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# NAPTOSA

## National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa

29 April 2020

### WORKERS' DAY 2020 – THANKFULNESS

On 1 May we celebrate Workers' Day.

It is a celebration of the rights of workers worldwide, gained over many years and not without major struggles and often severe sacrifices. In South Africa we are extremely fortunate that our labour rights are entrenched in our Constitution - freedom of association, the right to form and join trade unions, collective bargaining rights, the right to fair labour practices and the right to strike – and further enhanced through a number of labour laws.

We have, however, come to take these rights for granted, whilst there are many countries in the world where workers still battle to gain even some of them. Imprisonment of trade union leaders, and often leaders of teacher unions, still occur today. We should be thankful for the rights we have.

It is therefore painful to see the State as employer reneging on the implementation of the 2018 wage agreement. Not only does it undermine our collective bargaining rights, but it has put a serious dent in the trust relationship between public service trade unions and the employer. What exacerbates the situation is the fact that the Minister of Public Service and Administration announced that the employer was committed to the implementation of the agreement, only to let the implementation date for the wage increase come and go without even the decency to inform the unions that the increase will not be paid. NAPTOSA, together with the other public service trade unions, are therefore embarking on legal and dispute resolution action.

For thousands, if not millions, of workers worldwide, Workers' Day 2020 will be a day of doom and gloom as a result of job losses or salary cuts due to the COVID-19 lockdowns. For NAPTOSA members, Workers' Day, this year, should actually be a day of thanksgiving, because we are still employed with salaries and benefits intact. On this day we should think of our counterparts in other sectors of the economy that have been severely compromised. Also, co-members in private schools and SGB posts that might have been affected.

Let us hope and pray that we will see an economic recovery once all lockdown restrictions are lifted so that workers who have lost jobs will be able to regain them.

To let Workers' Day pass without once again saluting each and every NAPTOSA member for their dedication and perseverance in a job that is more than often performed under abject circumstances, would be amiss. The leadership of NAPTOSA wishes to pay the salutation forward for the work that members will be doing once there is a return to school amidst the COVID-19 cloud and the many vandalised schools.

As a union we have been in consultation with the Minister and Department of Basic Education throughout this lockdown period and have done all we can to ensure that we have the safest possible environment for

teachers and learners to return to. The health and safety of our members remain our highest priority at this stage. Please be assured of NAPTOSA leadership's unwavering support during this trying time.

But every cloud has a silver lining. In fact, for teachers the lockdown has had two silver linings. Despite all the online education platforms and programs, it has once again been confirmed that teachers cannot be replaced. And secondly, as never before, parents have come to realise and appreciate what an exceptional job teachers actually do - just ask any parent who has attempted home schooling during this time.

May we, on this Workers' Day, experience solidarity among education workers in pursuance of our common goal to get the academic year back on track.

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**PRESIDENT: NAPTOSA**