



**NUMSA condemns the Bus Passenger Bargaining Council for failing to ensure that the bosses pay the healthcare benefit to workers!**

**16 October 2024**

**Press statement**

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) condemns the Tshwane Affected Investment Operation (TAIO) that manages the Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) stations in Pretoria. It has flatly refused to pay the benefit of primary healthcare, which was secured in the last round of wage talks. The management is demanding that workers must make submissions to it, on an individual basis, as to why they need to pay the primary healthcare cover. This is outrageous! Workers do not need to justify to employers why they must receive the benefit. The Main Collective Agreement (MCA) of the Bus Passenger sector is binding on all employers and therefore, they have a duty to pay.

TAIO is not the only company in the bus passenger sector which is refusing to comply. There are many companies which are coercing workers into rejecting the primary health care cover. In terms of the wage agreement, the bosses must pay Affinity Reef, which is the primary healthcare cover for employees. Both the employer and employee must contribute R221 per month. NUMSA condemns the employers in the bus passenger sector for refusing to comply! This is a benefit which is entitled to workers and we are not begging employers. They know they have a legal duty to implement.

The agreement has been gazetted and extended since June this year, therefore, all bus companies which fall under the South African Road Passenger Bargaining Council (SARPAC) *must* implement this, so that workers can access healthcare benefit. Their refusal to pay means that workers have no medical aid cover. NUMSA also condemns the bargaining council, the SARPAC, for effectively abdicating on its responsibilities. They have allowed companies to exempt themselves without the council independently adjudicating on exemption, in terms of the MCA. The Bargaining council is like a toothless dog when it comes to this issue, and they are partly responsible for the suffering that workers are enduring. We demand that they play their role in guaranteeing this protection for workers. Their failure to do so, calls into question their relevance.

As a union we have been fighting against this because workers in the bus sector do not earn enough for privately owned medical aid. For some of them, being a bus driver is an extremely dangerous job because of rogue taxi operators, who have been attacking and killing them, because of the battle over routes, and unfortunately, the government has failed to act to stop the violence. When workers are wounded they have to go to public healthcare facilities because the greedy bosses refuse to pay for their medical costs.

In some cases, companies, want workers to take up the expensive medical aid cover which already exists, but is totally unaffordable to ordinary workers.

NUMSA will be declaring a dispute to compel the SARPAC to depose of its obligation to hold these rogue companies accountable.

**ENDS**

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