



NUMSA Press Statement

23 July 2026

NUMSA Secures Major Settlement Victory for First Battery Workers After Militant Strike Action!

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) salutes the heroic, unyielding NUMSA members at First Battery in East London! When management targeted 125 workers with forced retrenchments, NUMSA did not back down. We issued a 48-hour strike notice on 2 July 2026 and launched direct, powerful strike action on 6 July 2026.

Through the unified, militant action of workers, combined with unwavering solidarity, together we have forced management to concede! On 22 July 2026, NUMSA signed a groundbreaking Memorandum of Agreement that converts our collective power into a decisive victory for all affected workers.

Management thought they could push workers out with standard, bargain-basement packages. This NUMSA-led strike changed the game. We have forced First Battery to agree to terms that directly cushion and protect our members. What exactly has this secured for workers?

- **Enhanced severance packages:** Retrenched workers will receive 3 weeks' remuneration per completed year of service for their first six years, plus one week per year thereafter.
- **R70,000 ex-gratia payment:** In addition to severance pay, every retrenched worker will receive a massive R70,000 lump-sum ex-gratia payment.
- **Full July salary and statutory pay:** Retrenched workers remain employed until 31 July 2026 and will receive full July remuneration, along with pro-rata annual bonuses, accumulated leave payouts, and long-service awards.
- **Fast-tracked payments:** Management is bound to immediately request SARS tax directives without delay, ensuring funds are transferred into workers' bank accounts within 10 working days of receiving the directives.
- **Challenging unfair selection criteria:** Management has been forced to investigate bona fide concerns regarding unfair selection, LIFO (Last-In-First-Out) applications, and skill retention manipulations.
- **Voluntary Severance Packages (VSP) going forward:** Following a two-month operational review, the company must offer a VSP process on these exact same improved terms before contemplating any further retrenchment processes.

- **Upcoming Workers Indaba:** Metair senior management will conduct an employee engagement session to present the company's strategy and provide employees with an opportunity to raise suggestions and improvement initiatives, in the form of a NUMSA and First Battery Conference Workers Indaba over 2 days (preferably over the weekend without disrupting production). The outcomes of such an Indaba will be addressed by both the senior leadership of NUMSA and senior leadership of Metair and could be facilitated by an external third party. The ultimate intent of the initiative will be to find solutions that are mutually beneficial to both parties.

This agreement demonstrates once again that when workers stand united under the red flag of NUMSA, bosses are forced to listen. As majority representative at First Battery, this agreement covers all affected workers under Section 23(1)(d) of the Labour Relations Act.

Having secured these critical victories, NUMSA has officially suspended the strike, and workers are expected to return to work and normal shifts by Thursday 23 July, 2026. Striking employees who return to work by this date, will be provided with a R2 000 (two thousand Rand) advance, to assist with transport costs. The advance will be recovered in four equal monthly deductions, commencing in August 2026.

We remain vigilant. We will closely monitor the execution of every cent owed to our members and ensure the company strictly investigates every selection grievance. Let this be a warning to employers everywhere: NUMSA will fight relentlessly to defend and advance the interests of the working class!

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