



15 May 2019

MEDIA RELEASE

LEGAL AID SA TO CONTINUE SERVING THE PUBLIC DURING INTENDED DEMONSTRATION

A group of Legal Aid South Africa employees has placed on record their intention to embark on a peaceful demonstration on the morning of 15 May 2019 outside of its National Office, Legal Aid House in Braamfontein. The group has indicated their intention to hand over a memorandum to the Chief Executive Officer on issues of mutual interest. The CEO intends to receive their memorandum on 15 May 2019. We wish to assure our stakeholders, clients and members of the public that the delivery of legal aid services at court and our respective offices will continue without disruption.

Budget Cuts

Legal Aid SA has had to face budget cuts in recent financial years, which have affected the organisation's financial sustainability. The reduction to our baseline grant was absorbed by reductions in capital and operating expenditure as well as a reduction in the total cost of employment as a last resort. The Board of Legal Aid SA has remained steadfast in its commitment to, whilst absorbing the reductions in budget, ensuring meeting the operational requirements of delivering quality level services as per our constitutional mandate and avoiding job losses as far as possible. A number of the sustainability measures implemented included reductions to the financial attributes of our Employment Value Proposition such as, but not limited to, performance bonuses and rightsizing of the Group Life scheme. These reductions in employee benefits have caused dissatisfaction amongst employees.

Legal Aid SA's Chief Operations Officer, Dr Jerry Makokoane, says: "It should be noted that Legal Aid SA followed due Labour Law consultation processes in reducing benefits due to financial constraints. Legal Aid SA's position and interest remains that of being committed to meeting the organisation's constitutional mandate to render legal assistance, advice and education in terms of the Constitution of the Republic as well as complying with the requirements of a having a balanced budget."

Engagement with Employees

Legal Aid SA has been engaging with the Concerned Employees Group Representatives for a number of months on issues of mutual interest arising from budget cuts and shortfalls imposed on the organisation's grant allocation by National Treasury. These issues have been thoroughly ventilated both internally and externally at the Council for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration.

As such, we have implemented the budget cuts and shortfalls we experienced, as far as is possible, by not impacting service delivery to our poor and vulnerable clients, while being sensitive to employees' needs. We have thus made every effort to keep to a minimum the impact on job losses as well as any negative impact on employee benefits. In the final instance, we have to ensure that our operational requirements are sustainably met at all material times.

Dr Makokoane further says: "Accordingly, the rights of our clients are paramount and may not be unduly prejudiced. Equally, the organisation and its employees are accountable to the profession, courts and stakeholders. Legal Aid SA employees understand their professional duty and are urged to continue to uphold same in exercising their right to demonstrate peacefully.

We are confident that the issues raised will be resolved with our employees as we remain committed to a viable employment partnership. Legal Aid SA continues to champion the rights of all persons to access justice through the provision of independent, accessible and quality legal aid services in criminal and civil legal matters."

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Issued by the Communication Department of Legal Aid South Africa. For more information, please contact Legal Aid South Africa Communications Executive and National Spokesperson Mr Mfanafuthi Shabangu on 011 877 2056/066 301 6935 or the Media and Marketing Manager Mr Godfrey Matsobe on 011 877 2382/066 481 6792

Visit our website at www.legal-aid.co.za or call the Legal Aid Advice Line on 0800 110 110

Please be reminded that the name of our organisation **Legal Aid South Africa** is correctly abbreviated as **Legal Aid SA** and not as LASA. We respectfully request that you use the correct abbreviation **Legal Aid SA** which is representative of our mission to deliver quality **legal aid** services to the poor and vulnerable in South Africa.