

From the Editor's Desk

It is that time of the year when we are all gearing up for the Festive Season. It is also time to increase awareness of and elevate our efforts against women and children abuse. In this edition, we feature an article on the **16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children Campaign**.

We also report on the increase of foreign visitors to the PSC, as evidenced by the recent visit by a delegation from Zimbabwe. This and other visits provide us with the platform to profile our organization beyond our borders.

This edition of Izwi also features an advertorial from GEMS. It is worth looking at. Just as we did in recent editions, we also feature snippets of the PSC research reports published recently.

Continuing with the series on personal finance management, we have a feature on saving. We end off the edition with practical safety tips that will ensure that you and your loved ones have a peaceful festive season.

Cheers

Zimbabwean Delegation Visits the PSC

By: Thembi Nkuna

The visits by international delegates continue to mark the PSC as the ideal benchmark for good governance in the public service. The visit, on 9 November, by a six member delegation from Zimbabwe solidified the authenticity and the soundness of the PSC structure and role. Viewed from a continental or international front, the PSC's function and mandate is known for its uniqueness.



It comes as no surprise when the PSC continues to handle requests for visits. The aim of the visit by the Zimbabwean delegation was to deliberate on the Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry for Public Service Administration, focusing on DPSA and SAMDI. Overall, the delegation's mission was to learn trends around the operation of the public service in South Africa.

The Zimbabwean delegation was headed by Mr P Mudyawabikwa, Deputy Director: International Relations and consisted of officials from the Ministry of Public Service, Labour, Social Welfare as well as their Public Service Commission.

The OPSC was represented by Mmathari Mashao, Caroline Mampuru, Balungile Mbanda and Roderick Davids.

"These interactive sessions are key and instrumental in developing positive international relations. They also provide us with an

opportunity to profile the PSC while exchange strategies and trends on effective public service and administration and good governance," said Mmathari Mashao.

PSC Reports tabled in Parliament

By: Ben de Villiers and Simon Letanta

In its ongoing efforts to fulfill its Constitutional mandate, the PSC produced the following Reports which were recently released and tabled in Parliament:

CONSOLIDATED REPORT ON INSPECTIONS OF PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY SITES

During the 2005/2006 financial year, the PSC conducted pilot inspections of service delivery sites. These sites included the Departments of Home Affairs, Labour and Housing (Gauteng) and Social Development (Free State). Some of the visits to the departments were unannounced.

The inspection team, which comprised of Public Service Commissioners and officials, identified good practices and challenges faced by both the front-line staff and citizens during the delivery of public services.

The findings of the inspections were shared with stakeholders in the form of the report released. This will in turn promote the value of inspections as a monitoring mechanism.

The PSC has already interacted with the Executing Authorities of the concerned departments to share its findings and recommendations. It is also recommended that stakeholders should seriously consider inspections in their monitoring activities, given the critical primary information that it can generate.

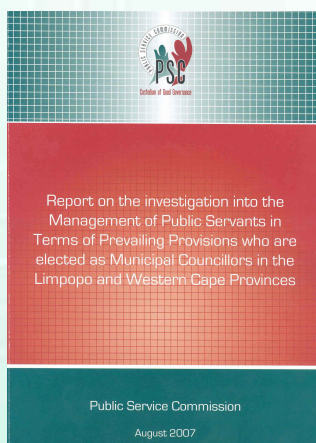
REPORT ON THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC SERVANTS IN TERMS OF PREVAILING PROVISIONS WHO ARE ELECTED AS MUNICIPAL COUNCILLORS IN THE LIMPOPO AND WESTERN CAPE PROVINCES

Public servants are constitutionally bound to provide impartial, fair, equitable and unbiased services to the country's citizenry. On the other hand, concerns have been raised about the effect of dual-employment by public servants. An area not sufficiently covered by national legislation and the regulatory framework that has come to the PSC's attention is the election of public servants as councillors in municipalities.

Apart from the concerns this raises about the ability of such public servants to perform in their work environment, given the new political responsibilities, the statutory and the regulatory provisions



governing remunerated work outside the public service may be transgressed. In accordance with its mandate, the PSC conducted an investigation into the management of public servants who were elected as municipal councillors following the 2006 municipal elections.



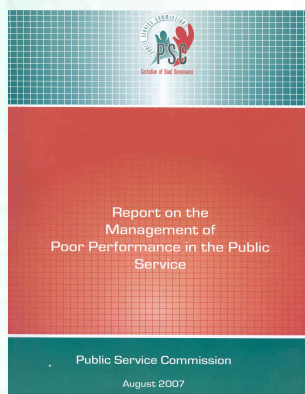
The *Report on the Investigation into the Management of Public Servants in Terms of Prevailing Provisions who are Elected as Municipal Councillors in the Limpopo and Western Cape Provinces* provides baseline information and a good basis for comparative analysis. In addition, the Report outlines data regarding public servants serving on municipal councils. It also highlights deficiencies in departments' abilities to manage public servants elected as part-time municipal councillors.

The Report notes that the PSC is firmly of the view that the practice of continuing to employ public

servants elected as part-time councillors should be discontinued considering the partisan responsibilities that go with holding a political office. However, if the practice is to be continued much more detailed attention must be given to the correct management of part-time councillors.

REPORT ON THE MANAGEMENT OF POOR PERFORMANCE IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Given that the public service is key to the realisation of the promise of a *Better Life for All* as contained in the *people's contract*, it is critical that its officials always perform optimally. The public service must, accordingly, constantly improve the ability of officials to utilise the resources at their disposal cost-effectively. While much effort has been made to improve performance levels within the public service, criticism continues about poor service delivery and lack of responsiveness to the needs of the people. Notwithstanding legitimate constraints such as shortages of skills, many of the concerns regarding service delivery can be attributed to the performance of public officials.



The *Report on the Management of Poor Performance in the Public Service* examines performance management in the public service with particular attention on the management of poor performance. Among others, the objectives of this research project were to:

- identify the key ethical issues and problems related to the management of poor performance;
- identify the nature of remedial interventions to assist poor performers and the extent to which these are yielding the desired results;
- investigate the extent to which incapacity and/or inefficiency measures are instituted;
- make recommendations to improve the management of poor

performance in the public service; and

- develop, based on the findings of the research, a practical, user-friendly toolkit aimed at assisting managers and supervisors to deal with poor performance.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROMOTION OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT, (ACT 2 OF 2000) IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Citizens require appropriate information in order to hold government accountable, play an active role in processes of governance and take advantage of the development opportunities that exist in the new democratic dispensation. On the other hand, the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) operationalises the Right of Access to Information. In a nutshell, the PAIA is one of the cornerstones to ensure transparency in the public service. It aims to create a framework for citizens to access the records that government holds, and sets out how government should deal with such requests for information. Likewise, the ability of the citizenry to exercise their right depends on how well the PAIA is implemented in departments.

Given its role as the custodian of good governance, the PSC saw it fit to evaluate the status of the implementation of the PAIA. The aim of the study was twofold. Firstly, to assess whether national and provincial departments have the capacity, systems, and procedures to implement the PAIA. Secondly, to identify good practices from national and provincial departments, and to increase awareness of the PAIA.

Based on key findings, the report recommends that:

- departments that do not provide the required information to both the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development and the South African Human Rights Commission must account to their respective Parliamentary Portfolio Committees for this lack of compliance;
- government departments must develop and implement comprehensive communication strategies to provide the public with information on the PAIA, specifically the right to lodge an internal appeal against a decision of an Information Officer or Deputy Information Officer; and
- departments must develop formal systems, which deal with all aspects of the requests for information process, as a matter of urgency.

IRC Hosts a Successful Book Exhibition

By: Joseph Malekana

One of the main challenges for the Information Resource Centre (IRC) has always been the stocking and maintaining of a good collection of books that are relevant to the needs of the PSC staff.

In order to address this challenge, the IRC held a book exhibition

with the purpose of exposing staff to material that is available in the market as well as providing them with an opportunity to indicate books that are relevant to their functions.

The exhibition was well coordinated and exhibited some of the books that Sky Information Publishers have on stock. The event was also well attended by staff.



With the understanding that the information needs of staff are never static, the IRC will continue with its endeavour to ensure that its collection reflect the evolving and diverse interest of staff.

16 Days of Activism Against Women and Children Abuse

When reading newspapers daily, one is confronted by headlines screaming about the abuse of women and children. To eliminate the scourge and increase awareness on this issue, government is again embarking on **16 Days of Activism For No Violence against Women and Children Campaign**.



This annual United Nations endorsed awareness-raising campaign, which starts from 25 November to 10 December, forms part of government's year-long, integrated and cross-sectoral drive to eliminate the abuse of women and children. It also contributes to government's primary developmental objective of restoring individuals' human dignity, within the context of safer and more secure families and communities.

The objective of the campaign is to promote the National Action Plan to end violence against women and children, in partnership with other stakeholders. These include the justice, crime prevention and security cluster, social sector cluster, provincial and local government, women's and youth organisations, traditional leaders, state-owned enterprises, faith-based organisations, the private/business sector, academics, non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations and the media.

It is hoped that the campaign will generate an increased level of awareness on how domestic violence against women and children manifests itself within South African society and the negative impact it has on these vulnerable groups.

On the other hand, the campaign aims to challenge perpetrators of such deplorable actions to change their behaviour and also emphasises the need to enhance partnerships between government, the private sector, all civil-society formations and

other stakeholders, in an effort to spread the message.

The 2007 campaign kicked-off with a Million Men's March (MMM) on 25 November in the Free State. The MMM is aspirational and seeks to mobilise men and the boy child for inclusion into the 16 Days of Activism campaign, and also to acknowledge that there are many men who are not perpetrators but responsible partners. It is hoped to touch millions of men and that in the future they should participate in the annual MMM.

It is of utmost importance that the 16 Days of Activism campaign reaches people at grassroots level and also permeate into the rural areas to make a direct and positive impact on the lives of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of our society. For the duration of the campaign, please wear a white ribbon and pledge your support at: www.postoffice.co.za and www.gov.za



Phantsi ngokuhlukunyezwa kwabafazi na bantwana, phantsi!
(Away with the abuse of women and children!)

Source: GCIS

GEMS Advertorial

More than 175,000 public service employees have joined GEMS ... and every day more keep joining

GEMS is SA's largest restricted medical scheme and only covers public service employees.



What benefits does GEMS offer?

GEMS provides comprehensive medical benefits through five benefit plans. The plans range from two comprehensive, top-of-the-range plans – Emerald and Onyx; a plan with unlimited hospital cover and a savings account – Ruby; and two network-based plans- Beryl and Sapphire.

Can GEMS members use private hospitals?

Four of the five GEMS benefit plans provide members with cover at private hospitals. Sapphire, the least expensive plan, uses public hospitals but, under specific circumstances, members on this option do have access to private hospitalisation.

Importantly, Sapphire members do also enjoy unlimited access to a comprehensive range of private out-of-hospital care including, and not limited to, GP consultations, dentistry and medication.

Can contract workers join GEMS?

Contract employees whose term of appointment is at least 6 months may join GEMS but these employees should check their subsidy entitlements with their Human Resource practitioner.

Who can I enrol as a dependant?

Members are able to enroll their spouses; their natural, adopted, step and foster children; as well as certain family members who are financially dependant on the member such as grandchildren, parents, grandparents, siblings, nieces and nephews.

How do I join GEMS?

It's easy! All you have to do is:

- Call us on 0860 00 4367
- Send an SMS with your PERSAL/PERSOL number to 083 450 4367 and GEMS will call you back
- Visit our website at www.gems.gov.za and download a form from the 'forms' link
- Ask your HR department
- Send an e-mail to join@gems.gov.za
- Send a fax to 0861 00 4367
- Send a letter to GEMS, Private Bag X782, Cape Town, 8000
- Visit one of our regional helpdesks

For more info contact GEMS on

0860 00 4367

Saving for a Rainy Day

By: Ben de Villiers

It is alarming to note that only a mere 7% of South Africans are into the habit of saving money. This low savings culture can be ascribed mainly to the fact that spending or 'living on debt' has become a way of life for many - an unfortunate lifestyle choice indeed!

Saving can never be overemphasised; lest one gets caught in a debt trap. In many circumstances, this debt trap becomes a lifetime circumstance - affecting generation after generation. The good news is that with enough willpower, discipline and a prudent plan, this cycle can be stopped. However, not many people know where to start. This article will hopefully provide some pointers that can lead to a debt-free lifestyle. After all, mishaps do happen!

Golden rules of saving

The following are some of the golden rules of savings.

1. Have a savings plans

It is said that those who fail to plan are in fact planning to fail. We all need short, medium and long-term savings plans. Be it for health (medical bills), for our children's future (education and life insurance), retirement (pension) or even the unforeseen such as vehicle repairs.

As a rule, one needs to get into the habit of saving by having part of the salary deposited directly into a savings account. The Personal Finance section of the YAHOO! website suggests that we need to save at least 15-20% of our take-home pay. From that amount, 10-15% should be towards retirement and the rest to the savings goals you are trying to achieve.

2. Get independent professional advice

We are not all financial experts and therefore, it is important to obtain independent financial advice before making any long term commitments. The general advice, counseling and coaching facility of the Careways Group provides PSC staff members with telephonic access to personal financial advisors.

3. Never put all your eggs in one basket

The more you spread your assets across the various savings instruments, the more resistant your portfolio will be to serious damage. After all, your needs can be diverse and stretch over a certain period.

4. Understand the risks

The higher the returns offered on savings, the higher the risks are. One should never sign up for saving / wealth creation vehicle without fully understanding the pitfalls that come with it.

5. Do not lock yourself in (or out)

Always have a vehicle where you can save your money in such a way that you can access it quickly if you need to. You must, at all times, be able to quickly and cheaply rearrange your assets to deal with your changing circumstances.

6. Keep good records

It is always advisable to keep records of all your savings. One also needs to have a Will drawn.

Moreover, many people lose tax deductions and other benefits to which they are entitled to because they do not keep proper records.

7. Keep your finger on the pulse

You should revisit your savings plans regularly to monitor their performance.

Savings options

The banks offer you many saving options and are constantly refining their savings products. Other financial service companies such as Old Mutual and Momentum Life also have various savings schemes on offer.

An important factor to take into account when choosing a savings instrument is regular income. In a nutshell, will you be able to keep up with the requirements of the savings offer, e.g. that you make monthly payments?

Due to the current turmoil in the global financial markets, you may also want to opt for Government retail bonds. These are virtually risk free and the National Treasury offers a better rate of return than conventional banks. You can apply to purchase them at post office outlets and also via the internet at www.rsaretailbonds.gov.za

Conclusion

There are numerous savings options to choose from. Make sure that you shop around for the best rate and the product that most suits your needs. Most importantly, discuss your needs with a qualified financial planner. It is also worth noting that some brokers disguise themselves as financial planners, whereas they are in fact only interested in selling pre-determined packages to you to increase their commission earning potential.

Please note that the comprehensive nature of savings means that only certain pointers could be given in this article.

Sources:

www.rsaretailbonds.gov.za

iafrica.com (Personal Finance section)

Personal Finance online edition powered by IOL

News24.com (Fin24 section)

YAHOO! (Personal Finance Section)

Lets all be safe during this festive season

By: Tinyiko Maluleke

The festive season or the "silly season", as cynics sometimes call it, is usually associated with sharing, loving, having fun, relaxing and all sorts of good things one can imagine. On the other hand, it is a well known fact that some of the horrendous misfortunes happen during this time of the year.

Adhering to basic 'festive season safety tips' can go a long way in ensuring your safety and that of those you love. Below are just a few of those valuable tips.



Domestic safety tips

With schools closed, children are likely to be home alone while you are at work. In that case, make sure that:

- the gates and doors to your house are always locked;
- leave the curtains open so there is direct sight of the yard / street;
- young children do not use urns and kettles unsupervised;
- young children do not use swimming pools unsupervised, and that swimming pool covers are used if necessary; and
- medicines and tablets are out of reach of children

Travel safety tips

Festive season trips can be a great adventure ... or your worst nightmare but if you plan ahead, your trip can be headache free.

- have your mechanic check your car about a week before your trip;
- map your trip and get on-board directions;
- do not overload your car; it could cause a tyre to blow out;
- start your trip early in the day. You will be more mentally and physically prepared;
- do not drive when you are tired; and
- always have these important items in your car - a first-aid kit, a flashlight with new batteries, a tyre gauge, a flare and a lighter, lots of water and a fully charged cell phone.

More tips can be found at:

http://www.health24.com/medical/Condition_centres/777-792-2557-2579.asp

Office Humour

I could not help it but job-hop... this is why

Submitted by: Nelly Lukhero

My first job was working in an orange juice factory, but I got canned ... couldn't concentrate.

After that I tried to be a tailor, but I just wasn't suited for it ... mainly because it was a so-so job.

Next I tried working in a car exhaust franchise but that was too exhausting.

Then I tried to be a chef but that didn't add spice to my life either.

My best job was being a musician, but eventually I found I wasn't noteworthy.

I studied a long time to become a doctor, but I didn't have any patience.

Next was a job in a shoe factory; I tried but I just didn't fit in.

I became a professional fisherman, but discovered that I couldn't live on my net income. I managed to get a good job working for a pool maintenance company, but the work was just too draining.

So then I got a job in a gym, but they said I wasn't fit for the job.

After many years of trying to find steady work I finally got a job as a historian until I realised that there was no future in it.

Do you know who I am?

Submitted by: Nelly Lukhero

It was the final examination for an introductory English course at the local university. Like many such freshman courses, it was designed to weed out new students, having over 700 students in the class!

The examination was two hours long, and exam booklets were provided. The professor was very strict and told the class that any exam that was not on his desk in exactly two hours would not be accepted and the student would fail. About a half hour into the exam, a student came rushing in and asked the professor for an exam booklet.

"You're not going to have time to finish this," the professor stated sarcastically as he handed the student a booklet.

"Yes I will," replied the student. He then took a seat and began writing.

After two hours, the professor called for the exams, and the students handed them in. All except the late student, who continued writing. Thirty minutes later, the student came up to the professor who was sitting at his desk preparing for his next class. He attempted to put his exam on the stack of exam answer sheets already there.

"No you don't, I'm not going to accept that. It's late."

The student looked incredulous and angry. "Do you know who I am?"

"No, as a matter of fact I don't," replied the professor with an air of sarcasm in his voice.

"Do you know who I am?" the student asked again.

"No, and I don't care," replied the professor with an air of superiority.

"Good," replied the student, who quickly lifted the stack of completed exam sheets, placed his in the middle, and walked out of the room.

Be careful...

Submitted by: Kabelo Ledwaba

Thirty days ago, I read that speeding can kill you;
The next day I started obeying speed limits.

Fifteen days ago, I read that smoking can kill you;
The next day I stopped smoking.

Twelve days ago, I read that too much red meat can kill you;
The next day I stopped eating red meat.

Five days ago, I read that drinking can kill you;
This morning I stopped reading.....

Your Office Dress Code Says a Lot About You

Submitted by: Kabelo Ledwaba

It is advised that you come to work dressed according to your salary. Read on to find out why....

If management see you wearing Prada shoes and carrying a Gucci bag, they assume you are doing well financially and therefore do not need a raise.

If you dress poorly, they also think you do not need a raise. All you need is to learn to manage your money better, so that you may buy nicer clothes.

If you dress just right, management often think you are right where you need to be and therefore do not need a raise.

I guess the dream of a salary increase is just that, a dream...

Staying ahead of the competition

Submitted by: Kabelo Ledwaba

A shopkeeper was annoyed when a brand new business much like his own opened up next door and put up a huge sign which read 'BEST DEALS'.

A week later he was horrified when another competitor opened up on his right, and announced its arrival with an even larger sign, reading 'LOWEST PRICES'.

The shopkeeper panicked, until he got an idea. He put the biggest sign of all over his own shop. It read: 'MAIN ENTRANCE'.

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