



NATU CONDEMNS THE RECENT ELECTRICITY TARIFF HIKE

The National Teachers' Union (NATU) wishes to join other public service organisations in condemning Nersa's recent approval of 18.65% increase in electricity prices for 2023 – and a further 12.74% hike for next year. Many people will agree that Eskom is an excessively inefficient organization, fraught with many administrative and moral shortcomings. Throwing money, and more money, at the organization every year, as has been the practice for many years now, is not going to be the panacea for Eskom's many woes. As Albert Einstein once said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." So, when will Nersa realize that throwing money at Eskom, over and over, and expecting a different result, typifies the definition of insanity?

NATU's condemnation of the tariff hikes is based on several observations. First, the extant economic circumstances faced by South Africans in general, especially following the Covid-19 pandemic, are real, ongoing and continue to be harsh. Second, and speaking on behalf of Public Service workers in general and Teachers in particular, their stagnated remunerations have thrust them into a state of relentless desperation. As we all know, this has largely been due to government's intransigence, recklessness, untrustworthiness and insensitivity to the plight of workers. So, against the backdrop of the extant tough economic circumstances, including high interest rates, low economic growth, high unemployment and load shedding it is extremely hard to find any justification for the massive electricity tariff hikes announced recently.

Third, NATU believes that Eskom's envisaged "recovery" will not come from incessant tariff hikes. Rather, the recovery and required results will be achieved through a deep inward introspection. Other 'hands' would have run Eskom differently and efficiently, but the past and current personnel have proved not to be capable of turning Eskom's fortunes around. Certainly, throwing money at Eskom each year has been tantamount to rewarding the organization for its inefficiencies and poor moral etiquette. Accordingly, Eskom's reported financial straits should have been seen and treated within the aegis of its own incompetence and numerous improprieties, not to be placed on the shoulders of the already overburdened Public Service workers – and other citizens, who are not to blame for what has been happening (and continues to happen) at Eskom. It is outrightly ludicrous that while load shedding means that consumers will be receiving less electricity, they must concomitantly pay more for it – meaning that they should pay more for services they are not receiving.

So, in conclusion, the focus should have been on cleaning up the enterprise, rather than punishing innocent citizens who are not responsible for the inefficiencies at Eskom, and whose own purchasing power has been eroded by stagnant salaries and wages. We should be discussing an improved service level agreement with Eskom, instead of talking about a massive tariff hike for a dwindling or disappearing service. Eskom has not been run efficiently for years, so it is difficult, if not impossible, to see how this tariff increase will suddenly lead efficiency and good governance.

**ISSUED BY NATIONAL TEACHERS' UNION
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