

MEDIA STATEMENT

TO ALL EDITORS/EDUCATION REPORTS

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NSFAS Administrator submits Stabilisation Plan to restore governance, operations and public confidence

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) Administrator, Professor Hlengani Mathebula, has submitted the Administration's Stabilisation Plan to the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr Buti Kgwaridi Manamela, for consideration. The submission follows the requirements of the relevant Government Gazette, and was made yesterday in the presence of the two Deputy Ministers, the Director-General, Deputy Directors-General and ministerial advisors.

Prof. Mathebula explained that the Stabilisation Plan is a product of a collaborative effort between the Administration and management team, who have forged ties to produce this piece of work. The plan details a carefully considered catalogue of interventions for an NSFAS which has been systemically hollowed out to the extent that its resources have been stripped of required robust institutional safeguards.

"Co-creation is the only path for my Administration, as our tenure is only for a specified period. This means that management and staff must have enough acumen to lead NSFAS post our time," emphasised Mathebula.

Prof. Mathebula said the stabilisation approach will be practical, sequenced and evidence-based. It will distinguish between immediate containment actions, diagnostic work, remedial implementation, monitoring, escalation and the transition back to ordinary governance

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

The appointment of Professor Hlengani Mathebula as the Administrator to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme is in terms of Section 17A to 17D of the NSFAS Act (Act 56 of 1999 as amended), effective from 4 May 2026 as published in the Government Gazette No. 54607 by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr Kgwaridi Buti Manamela

He said his Administration has therefore endeavoured to steer clear of analysis paralysis and focus on results-oriented actions, stating that NSFAS cannot afford to remain trapped in endless cycles of diagnosis. “Time for implementation is now.”

To this end, the Administration has created a governance structure, which is premised on workstreams, to drive execution throughout our organisation. These workstreams have been tasked with carrying out specific responsibilities to address key risks, implement corrective measures and resolve critical operational challenges.

The administration’s top priorities include governance, audit and consequence management, ICT, data integrity and analytics, student support, appeals and fair access, TVET colleges, reconciliation, student accommodation and stakeholder confidence.

“This state of our organisation is parlous which has facilitated selfish interest to take root. Therefore, my Administration’s decisive actions against the rot have provoked spirited opposition from those whose interest is being threatened. We have witnessed an emergence of media attacks which are fuelled by the so-called internal sources who are unfortunately manipulating the sacred journalistic tradition to drive their own agendas of looting the resources earmarked for our children,” elaborated Prof. Mathebula.

President Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa’s intervention via The Special Investigating Unit (SIU) was an apt acknowledgement of NSFAS’s governance failures.

Both Supply Chain safeguards and Internal Audit capacity have been significantly eroded. NSFAS has 66 major audit findings with a disclaimer audit opinion from the Auditor-General and 115 overdue internal audit findings, respectively. Special Investigation Unit (SIU) findings are a matter of public record.

There are nine material irregularities: Deceased Funding, Income Threshold Breaches,



National Student Financial Aid Scheme

Academic Progression Ignored, Duplicate Grant Payouts, Unresolved Appeals, Procurement and Tender Maladministration, Data Verification Breakdowns, Accommodation Contract Breaches, Accommodation Contract Breaches and Weak Consequence Management.

ICT is NSFAS's biggest operational risk. It is fragmented, manual and not fit for purpose. It holds everything up to peak frustration of students and partners, including institutions. The Administration is therefore prioritising data analytics measures that directly improve funding accuracy, payment reliability, fraud prevention, audit readiness and student service outcomes.

"Student accommodation has also been identified as a high-risk area both operationally and reputationally. It requires tighter controls, clearer visibility, faster claims processing and stronger provider oversight," expounded Mathebula.

Concluding his remarks, Prof. Mathebula said students deserve a financial aid scheme that not only meets but exceeds its stated mandate. He called on stakeholders to work with the Administration to rebuild NSFAS, strengthen accountability and restore public confidence in the institution.

Ends

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Issued by the **National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)**

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