

## MEDIA STATEMENT

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EMBARGO: NONE

### GEMS PLAYING A UNILATERAL GAME AGAIN

To describe a medical aid as sneaky, sly and cunning does not bode well for the members of that specific medical aid.

Medical Aid in South Africa is a basic necessity. Unfortunately, Medical Aids are aware of this situation and therefore have a captive audience and have the opportunity to increase the membership contributions unilaterally. However, it is expected of these Medical Aids to take the welfare of their members into consideration and to establish and maintain a mutual relationship of cooperation and trust.

If you are in a relationship where you as employee are only allowed a single service provider, as in the case of the members of GEMS (public service employees), a reasonable service to members should be expected as well as affordable membership contributions. In the case of the relationship between GEMS and the public service employees, this relationship no longer exists.

GEMS has lost the trust of their 800 000 members.

GEMS nevertheless, does not follow a reasonable approach to customer service. Customers now feel that they are being held hostage as they have no or very limited other options, and cannot terminate the relationship with GEMS. Customers demand greater accountability from GEMS.

GEMS makes one sided decisions and announces these without any form of consultation or timeous communication to their members.

As an example of this broken relationship, an announcement was made by GEMS that they will increase membership contributions by 9.8% in 2026. This is the average of contribution rates over various options. Members who subscribe to more expensive packages have indicated that they have been informed of increases of up to 25%. In response to enquiries on this matter, members have been dismissively informed that they can elect to move to cheaper packages.

GEMS has not indicated any improvement in member benefits.

GEMS followed a similar process in 2024. The public service unions spent the larger part of 2025 in trying to rebuild a relationship of confidence and trust.

The unilateral approach of GEMS has demolished those efforts and it is clear that the alienation

of members is widespread.

The SAOU has always been committed to a policy of co-operation with GEMS. Unfortunately the most recent conduct of the Board is placing the SAOU on a path of confrontation with a critical service provider to its members.