

PRESS RELEASE: IMMEDIATE

LOWEST PAID WORKERS' OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR COSATU PROTEST ACTION AGAINST THE ELECTRICITY CRISIS

Yesterday, SACTWU released two separate preliminary reports on the extent of participation of clothing, textile and footwear workers in yesterday's COSATU protest action in the Western Cape and KZN provinces. We committed that we would update the reports as soon as more information became available. We now do so and this report constitutes our union's final report on the matter:

Yesterday, 9 th July, saw 88% of the clothing, textile and footwear workers in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces protest in support of COSATU's campaign of rolling mass action against South Africa 's continuing electricity crisis.

Workers in this industry are the lowest paid in manufacturing, and their budgets are already stretched thin by rising fuel, transport and food prices and the need to support large numbers of unemployed dependents. Their willingness to support COSATU's campaign, while, in most cases, losing a day's wages, demonstrates their concern that increasing electricity prices could be a fatal blow to their already declining economic well-being.

An 88% participation rate means that 70,400 of the approximately 80,000 clothing, textile and

footwear workers employed in these two provinces had participated in the COSATU campaign.

These statistics were generated by a company survey conducted by the SA Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU), with information being supplied by company employer representatives and/or shop stewards. In the two provinces combined, the survey covered 328 factories employing a total of about 60 100 employees. This represents a sample size of 75% of the total number of employees employed in these sectors, in the two provinces.

In KwaZulu-Natal , where workers participated in the mass action through a stayaway as well by taking to the streets of Durban and Newcastle , the SACTWU survey found that 30,100 of 34,600 workers at 189 factories were not at work.

In the Western Cape , protest action mainly took the form of trade union-sanctioned extended lunch break workplace-based demonstrations. Our survey determined participation at 139 Western Cape clothing, textile and footwear companies employing 25,500 workers.

SACTWU regards yesterday's protest action as a dress rehearsal for the national protest action. The union will now prepare for full-blown protest action on 6 August 2008 in support of Cosatu's electricity crises demands and have already begun to issue an instruction to its members in this regard.

We intend to meet with various clothing, textile and footwear industry employers to explore ways in which the success of the action on 6 August could be maximised while simultaneously protecting a vulnerable industry.

Issued by

Andre Kriel

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