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NNF 4 of 2026

20 January 2026

STATEMENT ON SCHOOL SAFETY AND LEARNER TRANSPORT REGULATION

NAPTOSA extends its deepest sympathies and heartfelt condolences to the families, learners, educators and communities affected by the recent tragic learner transport accidents across the country. We share in the pain, grief and shock of a nation once again confronted with the devastating consequences of an unsafe and poorly regulated learner transport system.

NAPTOSA expresses deep concern over the ongoing crisis of unsafe learner transport, following a series of tragic and alarming accidents reported on *the same day*. These incidents once again expose the urgent need for stricter regulation, monitoring and enforcement within the learner transport system.

In Vanderbijlpark, the nation was left reeling after a devastating accident in which a minibus transporting learners collided with a truck, resulting in the heartbreaking loss of **14 young lives**. This tragedy has left families, schools and communities shattered.

On the same day, another learner transport accident was reported in **Rosettenville, south of Johannesburg**, where investigations revealed that the vehicle's licence disc had expired in **2023**, and the driver was allegedly driving under the influence of alcohol. This points to a blatant failure of compliance and enforcement, placing learners at extreme risk.

Yet again, in **Pinetown, west of Durban**, **nine learners** were treated for minor to moderate injuries following an accident involving a scholar transport vehicle on Monday afternoon. While lives were spared in this instance, the incident adds to a growing list of near-fatal encounters faced daily by learners.

These were only the cases that made it into the media – **how many more incidents go unreported, unnoticed, and unaccounted for?**

NAPTOSA therefore **calls for urgent and stronger regulation of the learner transport system**, including:

- 🔑 Mandatory roadworthiness inspections at regular intervals
- 🔑 Verification of valid licences and permits
- 🔑 Zero tolerance for driving under the influence
- 🔑 Proper vetting and training of drivers
- 🔑 Stronger oversight and enforcement by relevant authorities

Those who transport learners are entrusted with **our future**. Learner transport cannot be treated as an informal or unregulated service while children's lives are at stake.

School safety extends beyond the classroom. Safe transport is not optional – it is a fundamental right.

NAPTOSA remains steadfast in its commitment to protecting learners and calls on all stakeholders to act decisively before more lives are lost.

#SafeSchoolEqualSafeNation

Mr BL Manuel - Executive Director