

# Numsa refuses vehicle makers' wage offer

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The National Union of Metalworkers of SA's (Numsa's) 30,000 members in the vehicle manufacturing sector have refused a wage offer tabled by vehicle manufacturers and have demanded further improvements, Numsa general secretary Irvin Jim said on Friday (30 August).



Speaking at a briefing in Johannesburg, Jim said a Numsa central committee meeting had resolved to return to producers with a demand of a better deal. He declined to comment on what was being demanded, saying negotiations were "at a sensitive stage".

Vehicle manufacturers tabled a 10%, multi-year wage deal last week, with Numsa spending this week meeting shop stewards to iron out company-specific demands.

Numsa - which had previously said it would not accept anything less than a double-digit increase - said this was not a rejection but a process of presenting members' suggestions for improvements to the offer.

The strike, entered its third week on Monday, (2 September) is estimated to be costing the economy R700m daily, with assembly lines halted at global car manufacturers including Nissan, BMW, Toyota, General Motors, Mercedes-Benz, Volkswagen, Ford as well as at some truck and bus manufacturers.

Analysts have warned that protected strike action in the sector, as well as high wage increases, could threaten further investment in the manufacturing sector, which produces roughly 3,000 vehicles for export a day.

## Other disputes

In a separate dispute, Jim said a strike by 72,000 Numsa members in the vehicle retail sector, originally scheduled for Monday (2 September), had been delayed. He said the strike, which would have affected petrol pump attendants and auto-body workers, among others, had been delayed until next Monday (9 September).

He said it had been decided strike action at this time "was not appropriate".

"This is not a small sector. This is why we are demanding double-digit increases," he said, adding that consultation with members who are ready to strike would take place during the week.

A collective agreement between two unions - Numsa and the Motor Industry Staff Association (MISA) - and employer groups - the Retail Motor Industry and Fuel Retailers Association - expired on Saturday (31 August). The collective agreement contains a peace clause aimed at preventing strike action.

Numsa deputy general secretary Karl Cloete said last week that Numsa would not only seek double-digit increases for members, but wanted to extended conditions of employment and long-term benchmarking of payments for certain categories of work.

Employers had previously offered between 5.5% and 6% for different categories, but this offer had been withdrawn.

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