

'Give public servants cause to fear'

SIPHO MASOMBUKA

THE Public Service Commission wants the Public Service Commission Act to be amended to give it the power to punish public servants whose misconduct causes severe financial loss to the state.

Over the past six years, the public service lost more than R1.7-billion in 6 527 reported cases of financial misconduct by public servants.

The amount lost to unauthorised, irregular or fruitless expenditure increased from R130.6-million in the 2006-2007 financial year to R932.3-million in the 2010-2011 financial year.

Last year alone, R229.9-million was lost in 1 243 cases.

A month ago, auditor-general Terrence Nombembe revealed that eight government departments spent R33.5-billion on hiring consultants between 2008 and 2011.

"In terms of the current legislative framework, our responsibility is to advise, recommend and report," said Public Service Commission chairman Ben Mthembu.

"We do not have enforcement authority around those issues," he said, explaining the need for amendments to the act.

Mthembu said the commission had put its proposal to the parliamentary portfolio committee on public service and administration, and would next petition ministers:

He said it was time that corrupt

civil servants suffered harsh consequences, including criminal charges.

The commission's director-general, Richard Levin, said risk management and control systems in state departments had to be greatly strengthened.

"Failure to put adequate systems in place will continue to undermine the government's efforts to deal effectively with corruption," he said.

In his Budget speech on Wednesday, Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan complained that tender procurements took place in too many localities, making it difficult to keep track of the many financial transactions.