

# Officials pocket R48m

**TENDERS:** POLICE THE BIGGEST ROGUE DEPARTMENT, FOLLOWED BY JUSTICE

➔ But public servants who have abused tax money are legally off the hook.

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**P**ublic officials who abused taxpayers' money to get themselves government tenders amounting to R48 million are legally off the hook.

More than 200 state employees, who were reported to management for dodgy dealings, couldn't be touched because a new law hadn't come into effect yet.

And government can't do anything about it, Eugene Zungu, national leader: audit services at the Auditor-General, told the standing committee on public accounts (Scopa) in parliament yesterday.

This was because the Public Service Act was only set in play in August last year, declaring a conflict of interest of senior employees as a criminal practice, Zungu said.

"The findings of the AG relate to the period when there was no legislation that prohibited public servants in departments from doing business with the state ... they only include those contracts where the audit process would have identified noncompliance with regard to dealing with the conflict, for example interests not disclosed," said Zungu.

The report only dealt with the 2015-16 financial year, which found that the police and justice system were the main culprits.

These included tenders awarded to state officials and their family members.

The report only dealt with national departments. Provincial and local departments and state

entities did not form part of the probe. The biggest rogue departments were the police, with R15 million, followed by the departments of justice and correctional services (R6 million); trade and industry (R5.6 million) and public works, with almost R5 million in irregular spending.

In the department of police, direct employees who were directors or members of companies at 96 suppliers had been awarded tenders amounting to R8 million.

"I'm actually surprised and sad at the same time because it tells you that there is quite a high number of unethical officers and they are supposed to be the primary enforcers of the law in society," committee chair Themba Godi said. "At this stage, the rogues seem to unfortunately appear to be the police, followed by those who must prosecute from the point of justice and then followed

also by those who are meant to incarcerate offenders," he said.

In total, across the departments in terms of close family, friends of partners and associates, R6.7 million was notched up and the employees had never declared a conflict of interest.

Each of the departments highlighted as the main culprits would be summoned to account to the watchdog body, he said.

ANC MP Nyami Boo said "surely people had to answer to someone in their departments ...

"There was R48 million in irregular expenditure. What is the magnitude now and what amounts are we dealing with?"

The AG's office said it was only now working on that audit.

DA MP Timothy Brauteseth said there was really nothing Scopa could do.

"I'm not going to call them suspects, because they have done

nothing wrong in terms of the law," he said.

A fellow committee member said in light of legislation only coming into effect after the AG's report, it simply meant that those involved in corruption were in the green.

According to the 2015-16 report, 8% of employee-related companies had a hand in doing business with their own departments.

This was a marginal increase from the year prior.

— news@citizen.co.za

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**Themba Godi**

Chairperson of the standing committee on public accounts



President Jacob Zuma during the train ride between Hatfield and Bosman Station. The president officially launched the New Metro Commercialised Full Train Service, the 'People's Train', yesterday. Picture: GCIS