

Government employees still coining it from state

Chantall Presence

PARLIAMENT'S watchdog on public accounts is set to summon the admin heads of various government departments who are spending millions of rand of taxpayers' money on tenders with companies linked to government employees.

The Office of the Auditor-General (A-G) briefed MPs yesterday on the scope of the conflicts of interest before new public service regulations outlawing government employees from doing business with any organ of state came into effect in August last year.

It emerged that until the end of the 2015/16 financial year, several departments still had a high number of employees doing business with the State.

The A-G's report indicated that the Department of Police was the biggest culprit, with tenders worth R14.8 million being allocated to companies which were linked to department employees.

The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development spent R5.9m on companies where there was a conflict of interest. The departments of Trade and Industry, Public Works and Public Enterprises were also singled out.

"We want ethical public employees, and when employees do business with the state in contravention of the law, it tells you the untold possibilities of wrongs that can happen," said Themba Godi, chairperson of the standing committee on public accounts (Scopa).

He said the fact that employees who were guilty of not declaring

their interests or falsely declaring their interests were not being punished meant that irregular expenditure totalling tens of billions of rand would continue to climb.

"If you look at the ever-expanding amounts of irregular expenditure, they tell you that following laws and regulations is not what is at the top of the agenda of quite a number of state employees," said Godi. "We want to break this culture of impunity that has been there and we felt that, as Parliament, we need to take that responsibility of consequence management into our hands."

The affected departments would be called before Scopa to explain what steps they had taken to prevent its employees from unfairly benefiting from government contracts. – ANA



Themba Godi wants to break culture of impunity of tenders with companies linked to government employees. PICTURE: ANTOINE DE RAS