

Two jobs in one department for Nxesi's man

By **THABO MOKONE**

● The CFO of the department of public works, Cox Mokgoro, is being investigated for having two jobs in the department.

It is the second time in six years that Mokgoro is being investigated. The public service commission (PSC) is investigating the two appointments following a request to do so by parliament's committee on public accounts (Scopa).

Along with being CFO, Mokgoro is also the special adviser to public works minister Thulas Nxesi.

He was seconded to be the CFO of the department and adviser to Nxesi under an "arrangement" between the department and Honey Cloud Enterprises, a company of which Mokgoro is the sole owner and director. In terms of this unusual arrangement, Mokgoro is pocketing a gross annual pay of more than R2.2m a year.

The PSC also investigated Mokgoro's previous appointment in 2012. That was when he was seconded as CFO from another entity of the department, the Independent Development Trust. The PSC found that the appointment had been irregular because it had been approved by the director-general instead of the minister.

In its response to Scopa's request, the PSC confirmed that it had begun the investigation of Mokgoro's appointment as CFO.

However, the PSC, the watchdog of the public service, has declined to investigate Mokgoro's appointment as Nxesi's adviser because the appointment was not governed by public-service selection processes.

"The proposed terms of reference for the investigation are to investigate the ... regularity of the employment history of Mr Mokgoro for the period June 2016 to date, and the regularity of the appointment of Honey Cloud Enterprises and the payments.



Thulas Nxesi

"The documentation required to assist in the investigation has been requested from [the department of public works]," according to a statement sent to Scopa by the commission this week.

An employee in the finance unit of public

works wrote to MPs serving on Scopa, claiming that officials had the blessing of Nxesi when they previously discussed the involvement of Honey Cloud Enterprises in the affairs of the department.

In its letter, the PSC said Nxesi's alleged "role in the debacle" could only be investigated by the public protector because it fell within the ambit of the Executive Members' Ethics Act.

The whistleblower claimed Nxesi was "a bully" who was "intimidating the entire management during the audit workshop" that had been held last week.

Speaking through his spokesperson, Sabelo Mali, Nxesi declined to respond to detailed questions. Mali said the minister would comment only when the PSC had completed its investigation.

"First, the minister cannot disrespect the processes put in place by Scopa and the PSC by pre-empting their findings in the media.

The minister and the department have replied in full to both Scopa and the PSC with the necessary supporting documentation. The minister undertakes to provide a full public briefing when the PSC and Scopa processes have been completed," said Mali.

Mali also claimed that corrupt elements were trying to tarnish Nxesi's name because he was clamping down on corruption within the department.

"Be assured that the minister's stance against the corrupt elements in public works will not be deterred by their underhand tactics and false allegations against himself and other public servants who remain committed to combating fraud and corruption," said Mali.

Mali said Nxesi had not threatened anyone at the audit workshop but merely told staff that the Special Investigating Unit and the Hawks were in a parallel investigation on the trail of corrupt officials.