

# Mabuyane sold ANC-donated Jeep

The Eastern Cape premier sold a vehicle that originally was the property of the party

**Thanduxolo Jika**

**E**astern Cape Premier Oscar Mabuyane sold a Jeep Cherokee that was allegedly donated to the Eastern Cape ANC by a businessman who scored from multiple contracts in that province. The car retailed at R1.1-million at the time of the alleged donation in 2016.

In May, when the *Mail & Guardian* asked Mabuyane about the vehicle for a previous investigation, his spokesperson, Mvusiwekhaya Sicwetsha, said it had not been bought for Mabuyane's personal use. "The motor vehicle you ask about was donated to the African National Congress and was duly registered as the property of the African National Congress. It was never bought for comrade Mabuyane as an individual. When he was the provincial secretary of the ANC he used the vehicle for ANC business."

The Jeep, valued at R498 000, was traded in and Mabuyane bought an Audi Q7 in return.

At the time, rumours were circulating that the vehicle had been purchased by the ANC-connected businessman Lonwabo Bam. Sicwetsha specifically denied this, saying: "He [Mabuyane] does not have information that the vehicle was purchased by Mthombeni Projects and Lonwabo Bam as claimed in the questions."

But the *M&G* has since found that the Jeep was indeed bought by Bam, in February 2016. Talking to the *M&G* this month, Bam said: "I can confirm that I did buy the Jeep for Mr Mabuyane, who was the provincial secretary of the ANC EC [Eastern Cape] in 2016 on an instruction by the then treasurer of the ANC Alfred Nzo region, Babalo Madikizela."

Madikizela is now Eastern Cape MEC of public works and ANC treasurer in the province

Bam added that the money came "from a tender that he gave me from Mbizana LM, Project Name: Mbojeni to Ngele Access Road with the amount of R5180857.11."

"He [Madikizela] said to me that his mission was to capture him so that we can get whatever we want in the province because he's very powerful," said Bam.

The claim by Bam came as four different people with intimate knowledge of ANC Eastern Cape politics claim that there are divisions growing within the President Cyril Ramaphosa CR17 camp, as Madikizela is positioning himself to become the next chairperson.

Madikizela, who is also a former businessman, and is said to wield power through his financial influence in the province, said he did not wish to comment when approached by the *M&G*.

A trail of documents show how he used one of his companies, ELB Civil & Construction, for the purchase of the Jeep. It was then insured by Mabuyane's friend, Lisolomzi Sogayise, through his company Salp Holdings.

Sogayise told the *M&G*: "He [Mabuyane] asked me to insure the car so that it could get to the Eastern Cape. He is my friend."

The vehicle was subsequently registered in the ANC Eastern Cape's name in June that year. But according to Bam it was not delivered to Calata House in King William's Town, the

ANC's Eastern Cape headquarters. Instead, it was collected at the East London International Convention Centre by Mabuyane's security officials.

At the time Mabuyane — who is now the chairperson of the ANC in the province — was the ANC's provincial secretary and wielded power and influence over the provincial government.

Despite Mabuyane's claim that the Jeep was ANC property and his denial that the vehicle was not for his personal use, the *M&G* has established that, in March last year, he transferred its ownership to himself. In August, he sold it off to NTT Motors in East London. The *M&G* has made several attempts to request comment from Mabuyane since Wednesday last week but to no avail.

The issue with the vehicle arose after Mabuyane was implicated in receiving undue benefits, together with Madikizela. The two have been seen as allies of Ramaphosa — the province was critical to the now president gaining support ahead of his win in the ANC's elections in 2017.

The two were accused of benefiting from payments made to Bam by the



**Partners in denial: Babalo Madikizela (left) and Oscar Mabuyane have dismissed the claims about the Jeep as 'malicious' and 'unethical'**

Mbizana local municipality. Bam's plant hire company, Mthombeni Projects, had been paid for work, which it subsequently did not do.

Earlier this year, Mabuyane's spokesperson, Sicwetsha, said: "The ANC receives donations from anyone who wishes to donate to the ANC and those are donations for the ANC and not for private individuals. Comrade Mabuyane continues to firmly stand against wrongdoing and corruption by anyone."

He went on to say that: "We would like to appeal to your newspaper not to allow itself to be used by the individual who sent this distorted and manipulated information that is intoxicated by malice for an outcome that is diametrically opposed to the functions of ethical journalism."

In the article to which he was responding, the *M&G* reported that there were WhatsApp messages between Bam and Madikizela in which Madikizela provided the

banking details of LSM Distributors Randburg for the purchase of a Bentley Bentayga. The banking details of an East London draughtsman who revamped Mabuyane's house, Allan Morran, were also provided. A payment of R450 000 was processed on August 1 from Bam's account to Allan Morran's Nedbank account with the reference "Mabuyane".

Mabuyane and Madikizela dismissed the claims as malicious, saying that there was no impropriety in the payments received. Mabuyane said he had received a R450 000 loan from Madikizela as his friend and had no knowledge of the origins of the funds.

The two came to power in a fiercely contested provincial conference in 2017, during which ANC members beat each other up and threw chairs at each other. The conference, dubbed the "festival of chairs", was challenged in court. But the high court in Johannesburg dismissed the motion to try to force the party's national executive committee to disband Mabuyane's provincial executive committee.

Bam, a close friend and business associate of Madikizela until late last year, has had many government contracts from Eastern Cape municipalities and departments. The two would not say why they had fallen out.