

News24,

13 January 2020

De Lille eyes fraud charges over R76m price tag for state funerals of ANC veterans - report

Canny Maphanga

Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Patricia De Lille has instructed her officials to open fraud cases after the funeral and memorial services of struggle stalwart Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and two other ANC veterans cost taxpayers a whopping R76m, according to a report on Sunday.

The Sunday Times reported that she believed Crocia Events, owned by Pheladi Mphahlele and her husband, project manager Sammy Mashita, allegedly submitted inflated invoices after securing a two-year tender in 2017 to provide infrastructure for all state funerals. In 2018 alone, the company provided services at the funerals of Madikizela-Mandela, ANC veteran and former Cabinet minister Zola Skweyiya and former chief of state protocol Billy Modise.

But Mashita told the newspaper that he actually saved the state money because they would have been paid R274m if he hadn't pointed out inefficiencies in the tender. State funerals should be capped. De Lille has reportedly recommended to Minister in the Presidency Jackson Mthembu that state funerals should be capped. News24's attempts to reach the department and Crocia Events were not successful at the time of publication.

Madikizela-Mandela died on April 2, 2018, at the age of 81, after a long illness. The government moved the memorial service from Regina Mundi Catholic Church in Soweto to Orlando Stadium in Soweto after considering the number of people who were expected to attend, News24 reported at the time.

Family members, politicians, foreign dignitaries, celebrities and citizens flocked to the stadium to bid farewell to Madikizela-Mandela. Skweyiya died at the age of 75 at Kloof Hospital in Pretoria on April 11, 2018.

His funeral was held at the Christian Revival Church and he was laid to rest at Pretoria East Cemetery. Modise died at the age of 87 on June 20, 2018 after a long illness. City Press reported that hundreds of mourners, including President Cyril Ramaphosa, gathered at the sports club at Marks Park, Johannesburg, to pay their last respects to him.