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NATION

More than R130 million paid to suspended civil servants

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TAXPAYERS are coughing up more than R130 million for the salaries of 305 suspended civil servants, including 57 senior managers, who are sitting idle at home.

This emerged in parliamentary responses by Acting Public Service and Administration Minister Thulas Nxesi, to questions posed by DA MP Mimmy Gondwe.

In his response, Nxesi said there were 305 civil servants who were on suspension with full pay and the cost to the government was over R130m (R130 964 676) as at June.

"The number of senior public servants on precautionary suspension is 57," he said.

Nxesi's responses showed that 226 civil servants were on suspension in the nine provinces and taxpayers were paying close to R100m (R90 707 330) million towards their salaries.

The national departments were paying R40 257 345m in salaries of 79 civil servants on suspension.

Gondwe said the written reply reflected a number of gaps in terms of the costs of some of these suspensions.

"The total cost of these suspensions, to the South African taxpayer, is definitely higher than the R130 disclosed in the written reply," she said.

A closer look at the response shows that the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs is paying R2.3m each to two officials at salary level 14 and another R309 095 in the same salary band.

One official has been paid R3.1m by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation and 12 others were paid a collective R2.5m in the Department of Higher Education and Training.

The Department of Public Service and Administration coughed up R4.9m to one official in salary level 15 while Public Works paid its level 16 officials a total of R3.9m.

Gondwe said the written reply was also indicative of the discipline man-

agement crisis in the public service.

She said the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) had conceded during a meeting in August - with the portfolio committee playing oversight on it - that there was no discipline management system being implemented in public service.

"This has obviously contributed towards government departments failing to manage disciplinary cases within the time frames stipulated by the Public Service Regulations," she said.

"The DA, once again, reiterates its calls for the DPSA, as the custodian of policy formulation and implementation in the public service, to urgently develop and implement a discipline management strategy, in the public service, that will ensure that this crisis does not continue to come at a great cost to the already burdened South African taxpayer," Gondwe added.

The breakdown of the suspension and cost included the Western Cape coughing up R1.9m in salaries to 28 suspended civil servants; Eastern Cape paying R1.2m for one suspended official, KwaZulu-Natal paying R33.5m for 75 suspended officials and the Northern Cape coughing up R24.7m to 28 suspended civil servants.

The North West pays R.5m to 18 suspended civil servants; Gauteng coughs up R7.59m to 23 suspended officials; Free State pays R6.28m to 18 officials on suspension; Mpumalanga pays R2.8m in salaries to 26 officials; and Limpopo has no specified amount for its nine suspended officials.

Meanwhile, a total of 5 122 officials were dismissed from the civil service over the past three financial years.

Responding to a separate set of questions, Nxesi said 2 525 officials were fired in 2019-20, 2295 the following year and 3 003 as at the end of the financial year ending in March 2022.

Some of the reasons for dismissals included desertion, dishonourable discharge, falsifying documents and unsatisfactory attendance.

There were 6106 instances of dismissal where types of misconduct were not indicated.