

Publication: Mpumalanga News - Main

Title: SIU welcomes senior public works official's dismissal

Publish date: 19 Feb 2025

Page: 1

Reach: 10000

AVE: R 41740.83

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SIU welcomes senior public works official's dismissal

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MBOMBELA - On February 13, the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) welcomed the current dismissal processes of Kobus Sifiso Mkhabela, the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport's (DPWRT) deputy director of property management.

An investigation revealed that Mkhabela had been one of the senior management officials who awarded some multimillion rand Covid-19 personal protective equipment (PPE) tenders to suppliers who did not deliver the services.

According to a statement by the SIU, the suppliers paid substantial kickbacks to the senior management officials and their family members.

"The investigation uncovered multiple instances of corruption, fraud, theft and money laundering committed by senior managers and service providers involved in procuring PPE disinfection services during the Covid-19 pandemic," the statement said.

In 2022, Mkhabela was among three suspects who were arrested facing charges

of corruption, money laundering, fraud and contravening the Public Finance Management Act. Mkhabela appeared in the Nelspruit Magistrate's Court on December 14, 2022.

He was released on R15 000 bail and his case was postponed to January 2023 for further investigation.

“The disciplinary actions show that state institutions are holding officials accountable”

In July 2024, the Mpumalanga Division of the High Court granted the National Prosecuting Authority's (NPA) Asset Forfeiture Unit, the SIU and the Hawks an order to seize various assets and properties valued at about R52.6m, linked to 22 senior management officials, service providers and entities involved in an alleged corruption network within the DPWRT, Mkhabela being one of them.

The court ordered his assets to be frozen or seized, such as his bank account, his home, a VW Tiguan, a Mercedes-Benz, a VW Polo, his cellphones, Macbook laptop, microwave, television and washing machine.

Mkhabela is currently facing prosecution as the SIU referred him to the NPA for criminal conduct. "The matter is currently being tried in the Mbombela Commercial Crimes Court. The disciplinary actions show that state institutions are acting on the results of the SIU's investigation and implementing the consequences to hold officials implicated to account, recover assets and financial losses incurred by these institutions, and prevent further losses," the statement read.

Meanwhile, when asked about the dismissal, the DPWRT's spokesperson, Bongani Dhlamini, said: "The official was subjected to disciplinary processes, however, the matter is not yet concluded internally. We are waiting for the finalisation of the appeal process."



Kobus Mkhabela's VW Polo is among the assets that were seized.



The VW Tiguan that was seized.

Kobus Sifiso Mkhabela. Photos: Sourced/SIU's Facebook page