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LIFESTYLE AUDITS



THE Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Dean Macpherson briefs the media on the outcomes of the final forensic investigation conducted by PwC into the over R800 million Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) Oxygen Plant tender awarded by the Independent Development Trust (IDT).
OUPA MOKOENA Independent Newspapers

Minister initiates lifestyle audits to tackle corruption within Public Works

BANELE GININDZA

MINISTER of Public Works and Infrastructure, Dean Macpherson, has announced a comprehensive lifestyle audit for 400 high-risk individuals—approximately 10% of the workforce within his department.

This unprecedented initiative comes in the wake of a detailed forensic investigation by PwC into the award of a controversial tender, valued at over R800 million, for the Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) Oxygen Plant by the Independent Development Trust (IDT).

Highlighting the anomalies within the department, Macpherson on Tuesday pointed out that many who engaged in multi-million-rand construction projects had been found driving luxury cars, including R3 million Porsche models, without clear financial justification.

"That is a red flag. It's not targeting anyone, it's ensuring that we have people that put the country first as opposed to own bank accounts first. So we introduced two things the first one is about ghost employee audits," Macpherson said. "We required every single employee of the department to arrive at work and identify themselves or do so through a virtual platform. They had to put camera on and have their ID next to their face. We then said who are the high risk individuals. We have 400 high risk individuals, that's roughly 10% of our workforce [that] is classified as high risk and we do nothing about it. We had to act with speed, of course these things take time. The ghost audit will be released in the next three months."

Director-General Sifiso Mdakane shared that the first layer of high-risk individuals has been identified, which includes deputy director-generals and chief directors.

"The next level of high risk are those people who work in Supply Chain Management (SCM) which is quite the people that interact with suppliers, people in ICT and many other areas of SCM related governance as well as legal because they interact with contracts," Mdakane said.

"These are part of our reforms that we are trying to implement around SCM particularly though this is about IDT. I have said in another platform that we are really pushing this e-programming system as Public Works to eliminate the issue of human contact so that the processes are seamless."

Supporting the audit's implementation, Deputy Director General for Governance, Risk and Compliance, Lwazi Mahlangu, articulated the structured process of the investigation.

He said it started with a lifestyle reviews, which looked at assets and lifestyle disclosures and was escalated to lifestyle investigations if there were issues raised and grew further into a full-blown lifestyle audits if the investigation also brought up issues. "Now that's different because the reviews and investigations are okay because there are processes that are built into our systems that can be done internally, but with an audit it becomes a different approach because now we have to look at external parties that can assist, in this case the SIU," Mahlangu said.