

**MINISTRY: PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**DATE: 21 MAY 2021**

**QUESTION NO.: 1416.**

**Dr M M Gondwe (DA) to ask the Minister of Public Service and Administration:**

(1) With respect to the establishment of the Public Administration Ethics, Integrity and Disciplinary Technical Assistance Unit, (a) on what date was the specified unit officially established, (b) what is the current staff complement of the unit and (c) what has been the successes of the unit since its establishment;

(2) Will he furnish Dr M M Gondwe with a list detailing the job title of each member of the unit; if not, why not; if so, on what date? **NW1613E**

**REPLY:**

1. (a) In March 2019, the President issued a proclamation on the establishment of the Unit, to be effective from 1 April 2019. The Unit was therefore formally established on 1 April 2019.

(b) Currently the unit consists of nine employees: 1 Chief Director, 1 Director, 4 Deputy Directors and 3 Assistant Directors. Two vacant Director posts are in the process of being filled.

(c) The successes of the unit:

* Technical Assistance and support: Since 2019, various awareness sessions were conducted to assist departments to implement Public Service Regulations, 2016 addressing ethics; integrity and discipline management. This includes issues of financial interests, gifts, other remunerative work and employees conducting business with the State. Departments were also assisted with establishing Ethics Committees. Ethics Officer Forums were established and used to guide Ethics Officers on the management of ethics in their departments, focussing on identified challenges and new developments.

The Unit assisted departments in rolling out the *Guide to implement lifestyle audits in the Public Service.* This included conducting training of 41 Ethics Officers (on 3 – 4 May 2021) regarding the verification of assets. This training was run in partnership with the UNODC and the World Bank.

Supported by Co-Water Sogema, an implementing agent for the Government of Canada (under the Strengthening of Ethics and Integrity Project) the Unit is finalising online courses to enable Ethics Officers and departmental investigators to conduct lifestyle reviews and lifestyle investigations as part of the lifestyle audit process. Awareness sessions on the *Guide to implement lifestyle audits in the Public Service* were presented to all provinces and selected national departments.

The Unit developed and adopted a *Guide on managing discipline in the Public Service*, to assist departments in managing disciplinary cases and to address precautionary suspensions.

The Unit adopted a project in Q 3 of 2020/2021 to assist those departments with long outstanding precautionary suspensions to address their backlogs and as a result, the costs for precautionary suspensions. Due to the project, by end of March 2021, provinces finalised 78% of their precautionary backlogs (Q1: 1% - Q 2: 8%, Q 3: 18% and Q4: 78%). The cost for precautionary suspensions was reduced, with the cost for National Departments stabilising around R 20 million per quarter and the cost for provinces decreasing from the first quarter to the last quarter with almost R 25 million (Q1:R 87 million compared to Q4: R62 million). The Unit specifically focussed on two provinces with the highest costs pertaining to precautionary suspensions: Free State and Kwa-Zulu Natal. The Free State managed to reduce their cost from R 12 million in Q 3 to R 6 million in Q 4. KZN reduced its cost from a high of R 92 million in Q 3 to R 21 Million in Q 4. NB: The amounts are based on information captured on PERSAL and verified by departments.

* Monitoring and evaluation: The Unit drew information from 2017 and drafted monitoring and evaluation reports where trends on the following are monitored and used to identify needs and emerging risks:
  + Report on employees conducting business with the State (March 2021), which indicated a decline in employees conducting business with the State. In June 2020, approximately 1500 employees were identified to be possibly involved in conducting business with the State. This declined to 490 employees in Jan 2021, and at the end of June 2021 it declined to 96 employees.
  + Report on employees performing other remunerative work (Feb 2021). The report found that departments are successfully implementing regulation 24 of the Public Service Regulations, 2016 (dealing with approval for performance of other remunerative work). Where challenges are identified, the Unit intervenes with training and assistance.
  + Report on submission of Financial Disclosures (March 2021). The report found that 98% of SMS members submitted their financial disclosures for 2020/2021. 60% of MMS members submitted their financial disclosures. Most of these members submitted for the first time, as they were identified as a new category. The Unit intervened to address challenges through training, awareness sessions and technical support provided to departments.
  + The Unit established a database on Public Service employees appointed as board members to State Owned Entities. The database is used to monitor if those employees were appointed in an official (as allowed in terms of Regulation 13(c) and to cross reference with existing databases to ensure they do not perform other remunerative work or conducting business with the State).
* Cooperation: The DPSA entered into agreements with the Financial Intelligence Centre, National Prosecuting Authority, South African Police Service and Auditor-General South Africa to assist the Unit with monitoring the implementation of regulations and to share data. The Unit works within the Anti-Corruption Tasks Team to provide support to investigations involving fraud of Personal Protective Equipment, Unemployment Insurance Fund and Social Relief of Distress fraud by identifying Public Service employees and following up on the institution of disciplinary action against employees.

1. A list of the members of the Unit was provided to Dr Gondwe.