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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 2436**

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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NUMBER: 25 - 2021**

**2436. Ms L L van der Merwe (IFP) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

(1) With reference to a meeting of 1 September 2021 with the Portfolio Committee (PC) on Social Development, wherein it was revealed that the SA Social Security Agency (SASSA) was investigating applicants who have been identified by the Auditor-General regarding fraudulent payments of the Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD grant) of R350, what (a) is the status of the investigation taken against government employees who attempted to defraud the SASSA system by applying for the SRD grant of R350 since the meeting of 1 September 2021 with the PC on Social Development and (b) total number of government officials have been suspended pending investigation;

(2) Whether any matters have been referred to the National Prosecuting Authority for prosecution; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the further relevant details? NW2813E

**REPLY:**

1. The Auditor General identified 5812 government employees who had applied for and received the social of relief grant to the value of R5 498 500. Due to the volume of government employees exposed and also work which needs to be done, a total of 242 was prioritised in line with a resolution taken with other stakeholders at the Fusion Centre.

SASSA opened one a criminal case for all the prioritised 242 government employees at Sunnyside Police Station (CAS 753/08/2021)**.** SAPS recommended that SASSA open a criminal case for each of the individual on the prioritised list.

A series of meetings were held at the Fusion Centre to further discuss prosecution-led investigation, with another meeting scheduled for 26th November 2021. Working with the Fusion Centre, SASSA is currently in the process of opening such individual cases and this process is envisaged to be concluded on or before the end of December 2021.

1. No government employee suspended currently. SASSA has concluded its internal investigation of the 242 government employees. An internal investigation report was shared with the DPSA for the purpose of coordinating and monitoring disciplinary hearings as well as facilitating Acknowledgment of Debts (recovery) with relevant government employees through their respective departments. DPSA has since advised that of 242 government employees on the priority list, 198 were confirmed to have been actual government employees in the period of the Social Relief of Distress grant pay-outs, meaning 44 individuals are to be removed from the initial list.

In the meeting held by DPSA and SASSA on the 15th November 2021, as directed by the Fusion Centre, it was resolved that SASSA should submit evidence files per individual government employee. The process of submitting such 198 files is projected to be concluded on or before the 3rd December 2021. SASSA and DPSA is also validating the variance between 242 and 5812 (5570) and such process is to be concluded by the 30th December 2021.

In terms of roles and responsibilities, SASSA is expected to compile evidence files, while DPSA is expected to coordinate and monitor the processes of disciplinary hearings and acknowledgment of debts with relevant departments.

On the question of loss recovery, it is expected that cases of government employees who refuses to sign acknowledgment of debt forms be dealt with in terms of Section 300 of the Criminal Procedure Act. Disciplinary hearing and criminal prosecution processes will run concurrently.

2. As and when SASSA submits individual criminal cases to SAPS, SAPS will hand over the cases to the NPA for criminal prosecution.