

**MINISTRY: PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**DATE: 19 NOVEMBER 2021**

**QUESTION NO.: 2503.**

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

(1) Whether any disciplinary and/or legal steps have been taken against the 241 Public Service employees who, according to the Department of Social Development, received the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant in May 2020; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;

(2) What steps has her department put in place to deter Public Service employees from applying for the SRD grant following its recent reintroduction by the President, Mr M C Ramaphosa? **NW2925E**

**REPLY:**

1. No disciplinary and/or legal steps have been taken against the 241 Public Service employees who received Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grants in May 2020.

The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) is working with the departments of identified Public Service employees to ensure legal steps are taken where required. The Department of Public Service Administration (DPSA) is working closely with SASSA to ensure that disciplinary steps are taken against Public Service employees who received SRD grants in an unlawful way.

In terms of this arrangement, investigations are conducted by SASSA (supported by the Fusion Centre), as the DPSA has no investigative mandate. Furthermore, However, the DPSA plays a coordinating role and provides technical assistance to departments as far as that is concerned.

Up to date, the DPSA verified a list of 241 employees identified to have received SRD grants unlawfully. During the screening process, the DPSA found that only 198 employees on the list of 241 employees were in fact Public Service employees.

The investigating team therefore is currently focussing on the remaining 198 cases, and works with the South African Police Service to obtain statements and to collect evidence. This collated information is packaged in files which were opened for each accused. These files will be used during the criminal and disciplinary process so as to synchronize the two processes. The charges levelled against the employees will be fraud and misrepresentation. The investigation process is not yet finalised, but is continuing.

On 16 November 2021, the DPSA and investigation team from SASSA met to assess progress. The meeting resolved that the allegations against the public service employees are of a serious nature and therefore:

1. Disciplinary hearings should be held;
2. SASSA and DPSA agreed on the information/evidence to be included in the files to be opened for each employee;
3. For employees employed in provinces, the offices of the Premier will coordinate and monitor cases;
4. SASSA will provide witnesses;
5. Departments will have 90 days to finalise their cases from the dates of receiving files;
6. DPSA and SASSA will monitor the adherence to the timelines; and
7. SASSA will finalise the packaging of files.

Once investigations are finalised, the DPSA and investigators will reconvene with the identified departments, where guidance will be provided to labour relations officers to take the disciplinary cases forward in a coordinated way. The DPSA will source additional resources to assist those provinces with the most cases.

(2) SASSA is responsible for managing the payment of SRD grants and utilises its own electronic system to do that. The DPSA and SASSA linked the SASSA system to access information on the Personnel Salary System (PERSAL) so that current payments to applicants are only made after it was confirmed that the applicants are not appointed as Public Service employees.

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