

MEDIA RELEASE: **PSA advises Minister of Tourism to conduct forensic audit of Tourism Relief Funds**

DATE: 4 March 2022

EMBARGO: None

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) calls for a forensic audit to be conducted after the Department of Tourism allegedly erroneously paid over R13 million through the Tourism Relief Fund and the Relief Fund for Tourism Guides.

The details of these so-called erroneous payments were revealed by the Minister of Tourism in response to a parliamentary question. Increased corruption, maladministration, and abuse of power were experienced in many departments at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, as confirmed by the Special Investigation Unit report. It is extremely concerning that the Department could approve huge payments without verifying the credentials of beneficiaries, unless those involved had done so intentionally.

The Department has allegedly paid some beneficiaries twice and also paid deceased benefits. These funds thus did not assist the intended beneficiaries who continue to suffer owing to the impact of the pandemic, whilst some people are enjoying double payments from state coffers. It is not enough that the Minister undertook to investigate the matter as the Department clearly lacks capacity or means to ensure proper financial management systems. Even basics steps, such as confirming the identity numbers of beneficiaries, were not successfully executed. This gives rise to suspicion that these payments were made deliberately.

Government continues to plead poverty around every corner whilst billions of rands are disappearing down a bottomless pit through corruption disguised as “errors”. The PSA is disgusted by the continued unaccounted draining of tax payers’ money as ultimately employees suffer financially owing to a lack of funds for salary increases and service delivery is compromised. The PSA calls on the Minister of Tourism to institute a forensic audit, implement consequence management, and recover the millions that were wrongly paid. Government is compelled to display its commitment toward rooting out corruption and the Minister is called on to act decisively, failing which, the PSA will consider opening a theft case against her in respect of the more than R13 million that disappeared under her care.

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