

Anti-corruption bureau to fast track cases against public servants

An anti-corruption bureau will be set up to fast track disciplinary cases in the public sector, the Minister of Public Service and Administration Lindiwe Sisulu has announced.



(Image: GCIS)

Speaking at a breakfast media briefing yesterday, Sisulu said the bureau would form part of amendments to the Public Service Act, which she expects to come before Parliament in June.

The amendments also include banning all public servants from doing business with the government.

The proposed bureau plans to deal with a challenge that the government has long faced, namely that of officials who are booked off from work for long periods of time while their disciplinary cases are under way, with many of these cases involving conflicts of interest as well as fraud and corruption.

The lengthy time it takes to resolve cases costs the state and taxpayers millions of rands a year as officials continue to be remunerated while on suspension and because the state often has to pay other officials to act in their place.

Similarly, the government has also battled with public officials that are found guilty of an offence and, once fired, take up positions in other government departments or agencies.

Sisulu said amendments would also deal with this problem through the setting up of a central database to list public officials that are removed from office once found guilty of an offence.

She said the proposed anti-corruption bureau would be similar to one set up by the Tanzanian government recently and would co-operate with all the government's anti-corruption agencies.

A manual has been adopted by Cabinet and provinces on procedures in recruiting, retaining and dealing with those officials that resign.

An exit interview would be required for any resignation by officials with the position of chief director upwards, to ensure that such officials are not facing a disciplinary procedure when they announce their resignation.

Uniform standards

Uniform standards will be applied to all public servants across government, she said.

"We will, for example prescribe the time a department or province should take to resolve a disciplinary case failing which the bureau will have to intervene to complete the case," she said.

The department also intended to transform the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (Palama) into a school of government by October 21 to create more committed and dedicated public servants.

This would ensure that all core training of public servants would not be outsourced, but would be performed internally.

Sisulu said all new public servants will be required to undergo induction training and added that the present new intake of civil servants were currently undergoing induction training.

She said the Presidential Remuneration Commission, announced by President Jacob Zuma in the State of the Nation Address, would ensure that a fair, equitable and efficient remuneration system in the public service.

Remuneration, responsibilities survey to take eight months

The commission will review the remuneration and conditions of service policy in the public service and make recommendations concerning issues, including, among others, a suitable job classification framework for the public service to establish the link between pay and responsibilities of specific jobs - such as nurses, doctors, teachers and statisticians.

The review will take eight months and is set to start later this year. It will initially focus on teachers' salaries, she said.

Sisulu said the public sector faced a number of challenges, including a weakening state and the emergence of a tender state, poor service delivery, lack of innovation, violent service delivery protests.

The public sector needed to be professionalised with full-scale business processes, she pointed out.

On the public sector wage agreement, which was negotiated last year for a three-year period, Sisulu said it was a historic step between the government and labour.

Changing the once antagonistic relationship between government and labour had ensured that time was freed up for the state could move forward more easily.