

PSA calls for more power to Auditor-General to act against overspending

MAHIKENG MAIL – MAHIKENG: The Public Servants Association (PSA) said last week that they were appalled that lack of consequence management, inefficiency of oversight committees and limited powers of the Auditor-General (AG) had led to the loss of billions of rands.

The Auditor-General, Tsekani Maluleke confirmed overspending of more than R38.8 billion by government departments and public entities. This disregard for the rule of law seems to be the order of the day at most departments and entities. The AG confirmed that government lost more than R14.3 billion through payment of goods without delivery and ineffective use of resources.

The AG attributed this sharp increase in irregular expenditure to lazy and errant accounting officers and departmental heads who abdicate their responsibilities.

The fact that her office can only get accounting officers to recoup R3.39 billion out of R14.3 billion in losses, owing to material irregularity, is highly concerning.

The AG's pleading to oversight committees to strengthen their work in holding officials accountable, points at systematic failures where both the office of

the AG and parliamentary committees are not able to ensure effective consequence management. One such example is the payment of R700 million for training that was never provided.

The Compensation Fund received disclaimers in its audit for the past 12 years and the past year alone irregularities amounted to R11 billion, yet it is business as usual. Procurement and supply chain management processes seem to be the leaking tap of government, however, no one wants to do anything as politicians and the politically connected are the beneficiaries. Many departments and entities disregard the rule of law and ensure that collaboration with greedy service providers continues where there is overpricing, low quality or no delivery at all but maximum payments are processed.

These issues have caused government overspending of more than R38.8 billion in irregular expenditure. Noting the admission by the AG that her

office has limited powers and that it is impossible to put anyone in jail or to discipline anyone, the PSA calls on government to address the gap to ensure that crooks and thieves face the necessary consequences.

It is on this basis that the PSA calls for the urgent amendment of the Public Audit Act to give the AG more power. Corrupt officials and criminals must be removed from the public sector if the cancer of corruption is to be eliminated to prevent the country from going backwards as a few individuals will continue to unduly enrich themselves from the public purse. Delinquent head of departments and accounting officers must be taken to task for their contribution in the massive looting and must be banned from occupying any seat in public organisations or any governments and entities. Government employees and the public suffer as services are compromised, with no functional or upgraded working tools, performance bonuses have been discontinued, vacancies are not filled, meagre salary increments are offers, buildings are not maintained, and roads are full of potholes, yet the "connected" ones continue to thrive.