

Media Statement



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TO: ALL MEDIA

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RE: BOOKKEEPER SENTENCED FOR FRAUD

The Specialised Commercial Crimes Court in Bellville has sentenced a 61 year-old bookkeeper to 10 years direct imprisonment for fraud. Jacqueline Struwig was convicted on two counts of fraud and money laundering. The grandmother of four was sentenced yesterday morning after entering into a plea and sentencing agreement with the state. She was a bookkeeper at Rennish Girls High School and Stellenbosch High School between 1 September 2007 and September 2014.

Her responsibilities at Rennish Girls High School were requisitioning payments for staff after ensuring that funds were available. She was also expected to present the excel sheet containing staff information required to be paid. These were supposed to be presented to the principal. She had to load all salaries to payroll and release the payments.

At Stellenbosch High School, her responsibilities included receipt, record and deposit all cash payments to the school. She was expected to load all payments on the banking system and providing the school principal with the necessary supporting documents prior to authorisation. She was responsible for the processing and payment of staff salaries, reconciliation of PAYE, preparation of all documents for audit processes, facilitating the drafting of the budget for approval, ensuring internal control measures were complied with and general management of the schools' finances. During her employment at both schools but at different times, she channelled funds into her bank account and those of her husband, her daughter and an unknown bank account. As a result of her fraudulent activities, Rennish Girls High School lost R1 083 699, 59 and Stellenbosch High School lost R63 289, 99.

Senior State Advocate Ezmeralda Johnson says the fraud at Rennish Girls High School was discovered after the accused left the school and a new bookkeeper was employed.

“The new bookkeeper discovered that the accused paid herself salaries that which were not due to her. The school then decided to employ the services of auditors to uncover the extent of the fraud. Similarly, the fraud was discovered at Stellenbosch High School by auditors. The accused did not contribute towards the successful investigation of the matter and did not disclose the full extent of her fraud when she was confronted by the complainants. She was in a position of trust and abused it. She misappropriated the school’s funds out of greed,” she said.

The court also learnt that the grandma and her husband have a previous conviction of fraud of more than R100 000 for which she was convicted in January 2011. She defrauded her employer. In mitigation of sentence, she says her family was experiencing severe financial problems and chose to follow the incorrect way of obtaining money to ensure that financial relief was obtained for her and her family. She pleaded guilty, showing remorse, became suicidal after she learnt she was sought by police for her crimes and was prepared to serve her sentence and fully accepts responsibility for her crimes.

For the two fraud charges, the accused was sentenced to 10 years direct imprisonment. For money laundering, she was sentenced to 12 months but the court ordered that the money laundering sentence must run concurrently with the sentence for fraud charges. The court further declared her unfit to possess a firearm.

This sentence is another demonstration by the state that government employees placed in positions of trust to deliver services will not escape the might of the law if caught on the wrong side of the law.

Kind Regards,

Eric Ntabazalila

Regional Spokesperson: DPP Western Cape

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