

# Media Statement



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**TO: ALL MEDIA**

**DATE: 28 FEBRUARY 2019**

**RE: 12 YEARS FOR GOVERNMENT FRAUD**

Mex Dhladhla (48) from Bishopstowe in Pietermaritzburg was sentenced to an effective 12 years imprisonment in the Durban Commercial Crimes Court this week after pleading guilty to fraud and money laundering.

The accused, a businessperson, was in a relationship with, Nokwazi Patricia Mkhize (Chule), an official from the COGTA (Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs) Department.

In November 2015 an amount of R7 500 000 was to be paid from COGTA to the Ingwe Municipality. This money was for the building of a crèche/community centre.

Instead of paying the Municipality, the money was paid into the accused's bank account. On investigation it was discovered that Mkhize (Chule) had gone onto COGTA's Basic Accounting System (BAS) and changed the Municipality's banking details to her boyfriend's. Further, it became known that her immediate supervisor, Hlengiwe Hlela had authorised the procedure. The accused used this money to splurge on clothing, shoes and luxury items.

The Asset Forfeiture Unit obtained a preservation order and these goods were seized and sold via curators, however, the state only realised R120 000 from the sales.

During the trial, Senior State Advocate Ranjini Govender led the evidence of the investigating officer who testified on the accused's frivolous spending. She also told the court that COGTA effectively suffered a R15 million loss as they still owed R7, 5 million to the Ingwe Municipality and this had to be paid.

The accused was sentenced accordingly. His co-accused, Hlela and Mkhize (Chule) will soon appear in the Durban Commercial Crimes Court.

The Director of Public Prosecutions in KZN, Advocate Moipone Noko welcomes the sentence and conviction. She said, "I hope sentences of this nature will deter would-be fraudsters and assist in eradicating fraud and corruption."

Kind Regards,

**Natasha Kara**

**Regional Spokesperson: DPP KZN**

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