

# Media Statement



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**TO: ALL MEDIA**

**DATE: 31 JANUARY 2017**

**RE: MUNICIPAL SENIOR MANAGERS SENTENCED FOR FRAUD AND CORRUPTION**

Two senior Drakenstein Municipal employees and the daughter of one of the employees have been sentenced to fifteen years direct imprisonment and three years correctional supervision after they were convicted on charges of fraud and corruption.

Ezra Abrahams and Shamiel Cupido were sentenced to ten years direct imprisonment for corruption and five years direct imprisonment for fraud last week in the Paarl Regional Court. The court ordered the sentences to run concurrently meaning the accused will spend ten years in prison.

Vanessa Abrahams, the daughter of Ezra Abrahams, who faced only the charge of corruption, has been sentenced to three years correctional supervision and 5 years for fraud which is wholly suspended for 5 years. All the accused applied for leave to appeal which was dismissed.

Ezra Abrahams, was a superintendent and manager at the municipality while Shamiel Cupido was a senior clerk at the sales division of the municipality. They solicited kickbacks from three service providers in order for them to refer municipal vehicles to the service providers. Paarl Auto, MAG and Wynland were the three service providers who entered into a corrupt relationship with the accused to benefit their businesses. It was established that between July 2004 and November 2006, MAG received R600 098 for goods and services rendered to the municipality. Wynland received R1 405 833 for goods and services rendered for the period of 14 March 2005 and 21 June 2006. Wynland derived a benefit in the amount of R170 979 as a result of double invoicing. Brendan van der Westhuizen and Paarl Auto benefitted from the processing of factitious invoices in the amount of R32 000.

As a result of this corrupt relationship, Vanessa Abrahams got employed at Wynland. The arrangement was that, work would flow, following the employment of Vanessa and as a result, business grew for this company after her employment.

Arguing for a tough sentence, Advocate Tommy Bunguzana said there was a commonly used phrase in South Africa in discussions about fighting corruption which speaks about corruption as the cancer that eats away the fabric of our society.

"This statement is true, but is fast running a risk of losing its meaning and seriousness if lenient sentences are meted for white collar crimes, which is one of the critical threats to South Africa's growth and development; and an even worse threat to the fight against poverty. The actions of the accused were premeditated in the commission of this serious crime. It is submitted that the gravity of the offences for which the accused have been convicted demands for a custodial sentence." Advocate Bunguzana added.

The NPA welcomes the sentence

Kind Regards,

**Eric Ntabazalila**

**Regional Spokesperson: DPP Western Cape**

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