

Media Statement



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TO: ALL MEDIA

DATE: 09 DECEMBER 2019

RE: COGTA OFFICIALS CONVICTED OF FRAUD AND MONEY LAUNDERING

On Thursday, 05 December 2019, the Durban Commercial Crimes Court sentenced Patricia Nokwazi Chule and Hlengiwe Precious Hlela to an effective 15 years imprisonment for the R7 500 000 (seven million and five hundred thousand rand) fraud and money laundering they committed in November 2015. Their co-accused, Mex Dhladhla pleaded guilty in February this year and sentenced to 12 years imprisonment.

Both Chule and Hlela were employees of the COGTA (Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs) Department. Chule was in a romantic relationship with Dhladhla. The offence occurred when Chule transferred R7 500 000 meant to be paid from COGTA to the Ingwe Municipality for the construction of a crèche/community centre, into Dhladhla's bank account.

Investigations revealed that Chule had gone onto COGTA's Basic Accounting System (BAS) and changed the Municipality's banking details to Dhladhla's. Further Hlela, her co-accused and immediate supervisor at the time, had authorised the procedure. The accused shared the money, splurging on luxury items.

In aggravation of sentence, Senior State Advocate Ranjini Govender told the court that COGTA actually suffered a R15 million loss as they still owed R7, 5 million to the Ingwe Municipality and this had to be paid.

The accused were sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for fraud and 10 years imprisonment for money laundering. The sentences will run concurrently with the effective sentence being 15 years.

The National Prosecuting Authority welcomes the sentence.

Natasha Kara

Regional Spokesperson: DPP KZN

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