

Intimidation of informers by managers 'a problem'

The lack of protection for whistle-blowers, and their intimidation - in some cases by Cabinet ministers and senior managers - were challenges faced by the National Anti-Corruption Hotline, Parliament heard yesterday.

The Public Service Commission (PSC), which manages the hotline, referred about 120 cases of alleged corruption to departments each month, but PSC commissioner Selina Nkosi told MPs that departments generally did not have sufficient capacity to investigate them.

Despite these limitations, R333m had been recovered through reports of alleged corruption to the hotline between its inception in September 2004 and end-March this year.

"Perhaps a lack of protection of the whistle-blowers is the key reason many callers prefer to remain anonymous when they report cases of alleged corruption," Nkosi told members of Parliament's public service and administration committee. Anonymity made investigations more difficult as whistle-blowers generally did not provide sufficient information and could not be contacted later to give further information.

Nkosi said the key issue was maintaining "the level of participation and confidence of whistle-blowers by ensuring effective investigation of cases and timeous feedback. By the end of October, the hotline had received 261,788 calls of all varieties (including dropped calls and wrong numbers), from which the PSC generated 21,397 reports for possible investigation.

Nkosi noted that 3,439 government employees were found guilty of misconduct related to corrupt activities between September 2004 and the end of March this year.

But Democratic Alliance MP Michael Cardo was critical of the hotline, calling it, at best, a Band-Aid.

Source: *Business Day*, via I-Net Bridge