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Corruption Watch and TAC to take action to uncover information about SIU investigation into Gauteng Health Department

Corruption Watch (CW) and the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) are to go to Court to challenge the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) refusal to provide access to any information gathered during its investigation into mismanagement and corruption in the Gauteng Health Department between 2006 and 2010. The SIU embarked on an investigation into the department following a proclamation by the then President, Kgalema Motlanthe, in 2010.

“Gauteng Health department faces an ongoing financial crisis and the mismanagement of resources meant to realise the right of access to public health care is a matter of grave concern. It causes loss of life on a daily basis” says TAC Gauteng Chairperson Sibongile Tshabalala. “The refusal of the SIU to provide any information about their three year investigation is unacceptable and unlawful. Like all organs of state the SIU is accountable to the Constitution and the public”, says Tshabalala.

She adds: ‘The Gauteng public health sector has, over a lengthy period, experienced widely acknowledged corruption and mismanagement of public funds. These - a major cause of appalling levels of service delivery - are precisely what the SIU is required to investigate.’

CW and TAC requested access to information pertaining to the SIU’s lengthy investigation in the public interest and in accordance with the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA). The PAIA is intended to promote the right to access information in order to foster a culture of transparency and accountability. The SIU responded to the requests with a blanket refusal.

“We are extremely concerned at the approach of the public authorities to access to information” says David Lewis executive director of Corruption Watch. “The default position enshrined in our law is that the public should have access to information. Rather, the rote response of public bodies is denial of access which then necessitates lengthy and expensive litigation. This is contrary to the letter and spirit of PAIA and of our Constitution and to the public interest.” says Lewis.

“We are anxious for the courts to decide the correct approach to access to information. We will argue that the SIU should disclose information of this nature as it is in the public interest. Disclosure must be the rule, not the exception,” says Lewis.

For more information

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