



**MINISTRY
HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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MEDIA STATEMENT

For immediate release

Minister Nzimande welcomes Press Ombudsman ruling against Rapport Newspaper

The Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr. Blade Nzimande, has been a target of a sustained campaign of being tarnished by sections of the media. The most recent has been by News24, and more specifically Rapport newspaper. For some time now, since the beginning of 2015, News24 reporters have been out on a fishing expedition conducting clandestine investigative visits desperately seeking to connect non-existent dots between the Minister and the Pietermaritzburg based DAMCOM Trust, with regard to the SETA funding they applied for and received from these training authorities.

Rapport newspaper finally led with the story on the 8th of November 2015, in an article headlined “Seta miljoene is na Blade se trust – Verwaarloosede hoenders is al teken van lewe (Seta millions went to Blade’s trust – Neglected chickens the only sign of life). This story appeared on the same day in City Press under a similar byline, with the headline “Nzimande’s trust reaps R11m in funding from education organisations”.

The Minister subsequently lodged a complaint with the Press Ombudsman, and the judgment has confirmed the following:

The headline, together with some elements of the article, created the unfair impression that Nzimande was in some way conflicted, adversely affecting his reputation, as well as those of DAMCOM and the two SETAs.

This is in breach of the following sections of the press code:

1. “The press shall take care to report news...fairly”; and

4.7 “The press shall exercise care and consideration in matters involving...reputation.”

Under the headline *Hierarchy of sanctions*, section 8 of the Press Ombudsman Complaints and Procedures, this breach by Rapport newspaper falls under serious breach.

Rapport is directed to apologize to the Minister and other complainants to the matter for:

- Creating the unfair impression that Nzimande was in some way conflicted in the funding of DAMCOM through SETAs; and
- Adversely affecting his reputation, as well as those of DAMCOM and the two SETAs.

“I am very pleased that this matter has been brought to finality by the Press Ombudsman. News24, through Rapport, from the beginning were so intent in impugning my integrity as a Minister, ignoring facts and evidence provided to them in order to feed into the narrative that I am a conflicted Minister who uses his power and influence to fund DAMCOM as a Community Trust. This judgment represents a milestone and a strong message to the media that it will never be acceptable to abuse power and target public representatives and leaders with the aim to destroy them without just cause. I am particular pleased because the matter had become a political matter for some political parties in the opposition, as if this was true,” says Minister Nzimande.

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We attach herewith a copy of the full ruling.

Issued by the Ministry

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